

# Greek Influence on English Poetry

by

J. Churton Collins



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GREEK INFLUENCE  
ON  
ENGLISH POETRY

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A SHORT HISTORY OF GREEK LITERATURE. From Homer to Julian. By WILMER CAVE WRIGHT, Ph.D. *Late of Girton College, Cambridge; Associate Professor of Greek in Brynmawr College.* Edited by HERBERT WEIR SMYTH, Ph.D. *Eliot Professor of Greek Literature in Harvard University.* Crown 8vo, cloth gilt, 544 pp., 6s. net.

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*Charles G. Mason*

JOHN CHURTON COLLINS

# GREEK INFLUENCE ON ENGLISH POETRY

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## PREFACE

THE following lectures were prepared primarily for those students in the School of English Literature recently instituted in the Birmingham University, who had taken up Greek as an additional or subsidiary subject and had, therefore, to master the relation between Greek Literature and English Literature. The course of lectures was thrown open to the public, so that the audience was very various, ranging from students well read in Greek Literature to ladies who knew little or nothing of classical lore, and were attracted to the lecture room mainly by the hope of having the pleasure of hearing Professor Churton Collins recite such passages from his favourite poems as might happen to suggest themselves to him in the course of his lecture. Thus it is that in the lectures a good deal of matter that will seem obvious and elementary to classical scholars had to be introduced, in order to make the subjects treated entirely intelligible to a mixed audience.

Professor Collins would seem to have intended eventually to publish these lectures. He left all the more important portions clearly written out in his note-books in such a form that they are ready to be printed. But occasionally, when perhaps he was pressed for time and the course of his remarks was

plain and simple, he only jotted down more or less rough notes to prevent him in the delivery of the lectures from omitting anything material. This is the case with his remarks on the general characteristics of the Greek genius (pp. 9, 10), on the historical importance of Greek Literature (p. 23), and his account of the dependence of Roman on Greek Literature (pp. 54, 55). In these passages, so as not to break the continuity of the lectures, I have ventured to expand single words into complete sentences. Elsewhere English translations have been added to Greek passages, which were no doubt translated during the delivery of the lectures. I have also inserted the quotation from Spenser on p. 125 and those from Norris of Bemerton on p. 119. It is not unlikely that these passages were actually quoted when the lectures were delivered. Professor Collins had such a marvellous memory that he could, without mistake or hesitation, recite long passages of prose without reference to books. In the amount of poetry he knew by heart he rivalled the old Homeric rhapsodists. It was, therefore, quite unnecessary for him to transcribe into his note-book any poetical quotation he wanted to make in a lecture. He could trust to his memory and postpone the insertion of such quotations in his MS. until the time when it had to be sent to the press.

My chief duties as editor have been to correct the proofs, to verify such quotations and references as I could identify, to correct a few slips of the author's

pen and to make any such slight and obvious alterations as he himself would certainly have made on reading through his lecture notes before sending them to the printer. More abruptness is permissible in a spoken lecture, where intervals can be bridged over by tone and gesture, than in a discourse that has to be read in a printed book. In some few cases I have done my best to tone down such abruptness; but the lectures are still left with many passages requiring the *callida junctura*, which would have been supplied by the author himself if he had survived to superintend their publication.

Professor Collins would also no doubt have enlarged advantageously many portions of the lectures, in which he was compelled to curtail his matter as nearly as possible within the limits of the hour assigned to each discourse. Clear indication of this intention of subsequently making additions to the lectures is afforded by spaces in the MS. evidently left vacant with the view to amplification before they were given to the world. At one of these *hiatus valde deflendi* I find proposed the question, "Was the author of Beowulf acquainted with the Iliad?" but unfortunately no answer follows. In fact, all who read this little book with care will see clearly the want of the final touches of the vanished hand. But to the many who loved him and his teaching these lectures will derive especial interest from the fact that they are a record of his last public utterances printed, as far as possible, just in the form in which they

originally flowed from his pen. To me, who, bound to him for three years by the close tie of the *necessitudo sortis*, had the honour of assisting him in his professorial work and the privilege of sharing in the consideration, kindness and old-world courtesy that he manifested in his dealings with high and low alike, the preparation of these lectures for the press has been a source of melancholy pleasure, as prolonging for a short space beyond the limits of the grave my association with an intellect of extraordinarily stimulative power and with a character that had a really magnetic power of attracting the respect and sincere affection of his colleagues and pupils.

M. M.

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# Greek Influence on English Poetry

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Möge das Studium der griechischen und der römischen Literatur immerfort die Basis der höhern Bildung bleiben !  
—GOETHE.

## LECTURE I

### GREEK AS A FACTOR IN MODERN EDUCATION

IT is said that those living in the midst of revolutions which are changing the face of the world round them are frequently ignorant of the significance of what is taking place. And we know from history that this has often been the fact, and that men have had to pay a very heavy and sometimes a terrible penalty for their insensibility and unintelligence. But this is not likely to be the case with us. We are living in the midst of a revolution which is probably the most momentous, as assuredly it is one of the most silent, in the history of humanity. "Too full for sound or foam" is the mighty flood tide which is in very truth lifting mankind amain. But the silence with which this revolution is fulfilling itself does not disguise from us its tremendous significance, or lure us into conflict with the irresistible ; depth and volume have, we know, other criteria than chafing surf and a tossing surface, and the fact that

these are absent is not likely to tempt even an unwise man to emulate Mrs. Partington. The signs of our time are indeed writ large and visible everywhere. On all sides change : on all sides progress is manifest both within and without : within in newly awakened sympathies and interests, in newly kindled desires and aspirations, in newly defined needs ; without in great movements, and institutions and reforms which are the expression of all this in fact. Some of us may be dissatisfied with much that is taking place, may regard this with dislike and that with suspicion, nay even with alarm, but no one can doubt that every tendency, every movement of our age is making towards emancipation, equalization, expansion. Err and stumble we may, but our errors are the generous errors of precipitation, and, if we stumble, we are at any rate stumbling along the right path.

But let me narrow my theme ; let me pass from those phases of this great revolution which do not concern us now to the particular phase which does. I am here to speak to you about Greek as a factor in literary culture, and when, ladies and gentlemen, I look round on this large audience, composed, I know, largely of those who are pursuing their education collaterally with the hard work of adult life, and when I remember that the theme of which I am to treat, a theme little likely to be popularly attractive, was selected practically by yourselves, I do indeed realize how great a change is passing

over us, on what an important era education is entering, and how momentous are the duties awaiting those who are intrusted with its legislation.

What we want now is a clear conception of what ought to constitute civil liberal education, of the ends at which it should aim, of the means by which those ends may be best attained ; and the ends are æsthetic, moral and political instruction and culture, the means Literature, Philosophy and History, rationally and intelligently defined and interpreted. By Literature should be understood the best poetry, the best rhetoric, the best criticism, the best of what is comprised generally in belles-lettres to be found in the world ; by Philosophy, not those departments of it which are polemical or esoteric and abstrusely technical, but rather those which bear directly on conduct and life ; by History, neither mere antiquities nor mere chronicles, but, as Dionysius has so finely described it, " Philosophy teaching by examples." Experience has shown that such poems as the 'Iliad,' the 'Odyssey' and the Attic Dramas and such criticism as portions of the 'Poetics' and the 'Treatise on the Sublime' can be rendered as intelligible and instructive to the many as they are to the few. And what applies to Literature applies to Philosophy, applies to works like the 'Republic,' the 'Apology' of Socrates, the *Crito*, the *Phædo*, the 'Ethics' of Aristotle, Arrian's 'Discourses of Epictetus.' Will anyone pretend to say that they are not as susceptible of popular interpretation

as the Epistles of St. Paul, that the study of them would not be equally fruitful, nay that it would not supply a great and increasing popular want? No one who observes with discernment the signs of the times can have failed to observe that purely theological teaching as a means of moral culture is more and more losing its hold on the people, or at all events that it is not sufficient, that they need something more, and that that something more is precisely what competent teachers in such works as have been referred to will supply. In the philosophy of the Academy and the Porch the ethics of Christianity find at once the best of commentaries and, what is more, magnificent collateral security. And to bring therefore that philosophy home to all who are capable of deriving profit from its teaching ought to be as much the aim of the legislators of civil liberal education as the interpretation of doctrinal theology and the Jewish Scriptures is the care of the Church. But important as all this is, the satisfactory organization of political instruction and culture is of greater importance still. Every encouragement should be given to such a study of History as should be inspiring, as should conduce to the formation of enlightened views, as should aim at bringing the past into influential relation with the present. It is not with the eye of the antiquarian and specialist that the citizen should be taught to regard and pursue this study. Introduce him to Herodotus, to Thucydides, to Plutarch, to the great

classical historians of Rome and of modern Europe, bring them home to him, and you cultivate him. Substitute for minute and detailed study of the Dark and Mediæval Ages a similar study of the great and critical epochs in human annals and you instruct him. Bring home to him what is best in Political Philosophy and you double the value and interest of History. It was on these lines that the education of the Athenian citizen ran, and it is on these lines that the education of the adult English citizen should run, and on these lines sooner or later it will run. You are well aware that, however imperfectly we may be realizing this ideal of education, we are at any rate aiming at it : we know that it is the right one. And in pursuance of this ideal an important experiment is contemplated. If it shall be found that the attainment of such a knowledge of the Greek language exacts so much time and labour that it is practically impossible except for the few, can we not do something, nay do much, by judicious use of the best translations ? Is not half the loaf better than no loaf ? And one is glad to see that our Professor of Greek is so much of that opinion that he is preparing a scheme for introducing the best translations of the Greek Classics into his curriculum.

No serious student of Literature, Philosophy and History can fail to feel that a knowledge of what the Greeks contributed to those studies is of inestimable advantage, and that ignorance in these matters is

often a source of weakness. Is it possible, is it feasible, not simply to supply such information about these subjects as might be imparted and attained casually and superficially, but to bring by systematic teaching, coupled with instruction in the original language where possible, the Literature, the Philosophy, the History of Greece into influential relation with modern life? Are we ready, are we ripe for a second Renaissance? Is Greek, which has so long been for the most part the peculiar property of the technical scholar, which was so long degraded into a mere instrument for philological instruction, to become again—and to people generally—the articulate voice of the genius of Hellas? It is with the hope of furthering this movement that the present lectures—and I would that they had been entrusted to abler hands—have been instituted. You will see from the syllabus that their purpose is to show how intimate, nay how indissoluble is the connexion between our own Literature and the Literature of Greece, how, historically speaking, unintelligible are the development and many of the peculiarities of our poetry and much of our prose without reference to Hellenic sources.

Now, in what consists the importance of Greek as a factor in higher education? To a finished critic and scholar it is indispensable, to the ordinary student it is of inestimable value, of more value not from one but from very many points of view than any other language he could attain, than any other literature

he could study. Of no other subject can it be said with equal justice that it fulfils so completely the ends attainable by a particular study, the intrinsic value of the mere knowledge acquired, and at the same time supplies so well the intellectual discipline, the moral and æsthetic discipline afforded by the process of acquisition in all those branches of knowledge that are most effective in training the will and the intellect. That knowledge places in our hands the historical key to the development of almost every important branch of Literature which has taken form among the nations of the West—it enables us to trace to their source and origin Philosophy in all its branches, Metaphysical, Ethical and, in many important respects, Political Philosophy.

Listen to Sir Henry Maine in his Rede Lecture for 1875: "To one small people covering in its original seat no more than a handbreadth of territory it was given to create the principle of Progress, of movement onwards and not backwards or downwards, of destruction tending to construction. That people was the Greek. Except the blind forces of Nature nothing moves in this world which is not Greek in its origin." Listen to what Shelley says in the Preface to his 'Hellas': "We are all Greeks. Our laws, our literature, our religion, our arts have their root in Greece. But for Greece—Rome the instructor, the conqueror, or the metropolis of our ancestors, would have spread no illumination with her arms and we might still have been savages and idolaters."

How many of the truths by which we live, how much of the wisdom crystallized in our proverbs and commonplaces, how much of our sentiment and our principles are to be traced to Greek sources! The man who saw nothing original in 'Hamlet' because he said it was all made up of quotations, is no bad illustration of one who brings an adequate acquaintance with Greek Literature, Philosophy and Art to bear on the historical study of the world of modern thought. What the sun is to the physical world, the Art, the Literature and the Philosophy of Greece are to the world of intelligence, sensation and knowledge. The Greeks are the aristocrats, in the true sense of the term, of the human race, by virtue of their language, their achievement, their tone, temper and character.

Take their language—the most musical, the most plastic, and in some respects most perfect instrument of expression ever moulded by man, a language which, blending as it does the sonorous majesty of Latin and Spanish, the liquid mellifluousness of Italian and the many-toned harmonies of our own richly complex tongue, is for the expression of poetry and oratory literally without rival in the languages of the world. It may well be called, in the eloquent words of Nelson Coleridge, "the shrine of the genius of the old world; as universal as our race, as individual as ourselves; of infinite flexibility, of indefatigable strength, with the complication and the distinctness of nature herself: to which nothing was vulgar, from which nothing was excluded; speaking

to the ear like Italian, speaking to the mind like English, with words like pictures, with words like the gossamer film of the summer."

What the most mobile and sensitively responsive features are to the human face, what the most exquisitely modulated voice is to the vocal expression of emotion, that are the particles of this wonderful language to written speech. How admirably suitable is its vocabulary for the expression of subtle thought by terms which, as Gibbon puts it, "give soul to the objects of sense, and a body to the abstractions of philosophy!"

Bacon has remarked that there is no stound or impediment in the wit but may be wrought out by proper studies, and surely we ought to direct study and education to the correction of what most needs correction. The characteristic defects of the Teutonic nations, by which we mean, for they are the only ones of capital importance, the English and German, are precisely those which contact with the peculiar genius and temper of classical Greece is most calculated to correct. It has therefore always seemed to me a great pity that German and Latin should be forced so much into prominence, instead of Italian, French and Greek.

It might seem difficult to generalize on the national character of the Greeks. Their period of activity, as far as is recorded in history, extended from about 900 B.C. to 300 A.D., a period of twelve centuries. There was an immense difference between an Achæan

of the Homeric Age, an Athenian of the age of Pericles, and the Greeks of Alexandria under the Ptolemies. The nation was composed of various sections having very distinct characteristics and priding themselves on the retention of their special idiosyncrasies. Indeed, the Greek genius was Protean and plastic beyond parallel.

Nevertheless, in spite of all these elements of difference, certain common characteristics may be clearly distinguished, chief among which was the appreciation of beauty as consisting in harmony, symmetry, measure. These qualities pervade everything that is Greek: architecture, sculpture, pottery, conduct, philosophy and literature. To all their works the Greeks applied their favourite proverbs, *μηδὲν ἄγαν* (nothing to excess), *πλέον ἤμισυ παντός* (the whole greater than the part), and the ideas of *καιρός* (drawing the line) and *τὸ πέρας* (limitation). "The Greeks," says Coleridge, "idealized the finite and were therefore the masters of all grace, elegance, proportion, fancy, dignity, majesty—of whatever, in short, is capable of being definitely conveyed by defined forms or thought." In everything, says Pindar,<sup>1</sup> there is measure, and to understand this measure is what is most to the point for us.

We see it manifested in the examples of perfect style left by the great Greek writers of prose and poetry, and in the precepts of Aristotle. "Style," he lays down (*Rhetoric* III, vii), "will possess the quality

<sup>1</sup> Pyth. II, 34.

of being in good taste if it be expressive at once of feeling and character and in keeping with the subject matter. And this proportion is preserved, provided the style be neither careless on questions of dignity nor dignified on such as are mean, and if ornament be not attached to a mean word, for otherwise it appears mere burlesque." The love of moderation and proportion appears as clearly in the doctrine of the mean in ethics, in their theory of education to comprehend the whole, the symmetrical development of the whole nature, physical, æsthetic, moral, intellectual. The idea of beauty and proportion is brought into the domain of ethics through their identification of the good with the beautiful, so far as we can discern it. The same tendency is revealed in their love of τὸ πρέπον—the becoming—what is in good taste! The perfect man is the man who lives to the full with his whole nature perfectly harmonized in fullest symmetry. Such were Cyrus in Xenophon's Romance, the Theseus of Sophocles, and Sophocles himself. Sappho says :—

Ὁ μὲν γὰρ κάλος ὅσσον ἰδὴν πέλεται ἀγαθός,  
ὃ δὲ ἀγαθὸς αὐτίκα καὶ κάλος ἔσσεται.

(He who is beautiful, so far as we can discern, is good, and he who is good will immediately be also beautiful.) Indeed, the Beautiful is everywhere predominant in Greek life and thought. Simonides in his verses on happiness prays first for health and next for beauty, and among those who fell at Platæa a monument was erected to Callicrates because he was

the fairest who fell on that day.<sup>1</sup> Everywhere the Beautiful! Read Theognis i, 15-18:—

Μοῦσαι καὶ χάριτες, κοῦραι Διός, αἵ ποτε Κάδμου  
 ἐς γάμον ἐλθοῦσαι καλὸν αἰείσατ' ἔπος.  
 "Ὅττι καλόν, φίλον ἔστι· τὸ δ' οὐ καλὸν οὐ φίλον ἔστι.  
 τοῦτ' ἔπος ἀθανάτων ἦλθε διὰ στομάτων.

(Muses and Graces, daughters of Zeus, who once coming to the marriage of Cadmus sang a fair song: "What is beautiful is beloved, and that which is not beautiful is not beloved." This saying came from immortal lips.) Look at their conception of the State. The whole thing was music, in which each person was a harmonized individual, a note in harmony with other harmonized individuals—the music of the whole being the State, which

"Through high and low and lower  
 Put into parts, doth keep in one concent  
 Congreeing in a full and natural close  
 Like music."<sup>2</sup>

Hence the elaborate use of music among the Greeks for the purpose of disciplining the emotions. Hence, too, the careful attention they paid to the education and due temper of the emotional nature, of fear, pity, affection, impulse. The purgation of pity and fear was, according to Aristotle, the end of tragedy.

The love of moderation in the Greek mind was shown in their speech and writings, for, as we are told, *Graeci omnia amant dubitantiùs loqui*, and, above all, in their conception of the relation between man

<sup>1</sup> Cf. 'Iliad' ii, 673-675.

<sup>2</sup> 'Henry V,' I, ii, 182.

and the Divine, they very clearly recognized the necessity of subduing ourselves, our instincts, aspirations, hopes to the conditions imposed on us by Nature and the Divine Power. "Born into life we are, and life must be our mould." Plutarch in his 'Consolation to Apollonius' reminds him that "there are two sentences inscribed upon the Delphic oracle, which are most necessary for man's life, 'Know thyself,' and 'Nothing too much,' and upon these all other precepts depend." Heracles in the 'Alcestis' of Euripides well says that "being mortal it is necessary that we should think like mortals." So too Pindar warns the winner in the Pankration :—

μὴ μάτερε Ζεὺς γένεσθαι · πάντ' ἔχεις  
εἰ σέ τούτων μοῖρ' ἐφίκοιτο καλῶν.  
θνᾶτα θνατοῖσι πρέπει.<sup>1</sup>

(seek not to be Zeus. Thou hast all, if thou shouldst obtain a share of these honours. To mortals what is mortal is seemly.)

"A man is not as God,  
But then most God-like being most a man,"<sup>2</sup>

that is, knowing his place, fulfilling himself under the conditions prescribed by Nature and God, nor expecting more from either than either has to give. Tennyson's Tithonus is a true Greek when he says:—

"Why should a man desire in any way  
To vary from the kindly race of man,  
And pass beyond the goal or ordinance  
Where all should pause as is most meet for all?"

<sup>1</sup> Isth. V, 14-16.

<sup>2</sup> Tennyson's 'Love and Duty,' 31.

To ascertain and recognize our limits, to keep within them, to feel the folly of that egotism, that Titanism, whereby man puts himself into a false position and so gets out of tune with Nature, Fate and Law—this is what they abominated. When Byron mourned that Nature would not take notice of his death, when Richard Jeffries wrote, “Nature is everything to me, but I am nothing to nature ; it is very bitter to know this before one is dead,” they struck the modern note, a false note, and how persistently has that note vibrated since the dominance of Christianity, one of the effects of which has undoubtedly been the undue exaltation of the individual life, leading in its perversion to so much discord and tumult ! But how sane, how harmonious is the Greek conception of the relation of man to Nature and God ! Let Pindar put it for us—“Creatures of a day, what are we ? What are we not ? Man is but the dream of a shadow. But yet when the God-given radiance comes, brilliant light is upon mortals and gentle life.”<sup>1</sup> Again, “One race of men : one race of Gods, but we both draw life from one mother ; but all diversity of power doth sunder us, for the one is verily nothing, but the brazen heaven abideth an unshaken foundation. For all that we be not utterly unlike immortals, though we know not what goal destiny doth mark out for us to run to either by day or by night. What is thy confidence in the knowledge thou hast, for there is no way for spirit or flesh to search out the counsels

<sup>1</sup> Pyth. VIII, 95-97.

of Gods.”<sup>1</sup> And thus, and necessarily from this harmonious conception of the relations between man and nature—the divine and the human—sprang the most beautiful, the most rational religion which man has formulated, and that religion found its embodiment in a mythology of inexpressible loveliness and majesty, and in a poetry of immortal charm and power. Let us notice here that one of the chief educational effects which the study of the best Greek poetry is calculated to produce is the formation, not in the narrow but in the true sense of the term, of a religious habit and temper of mind and feeling. Well has Matthew Arnold said: “In the century preceding the Peloponnesian War from about 530 B.C. to about 430 poetry made, it seems to me, the noblest and most successful effort she has ever made, as the priestess of the imaginative reason, of the element by which the modern spirit if it would live right, has chiefly to live.” The ‘*Odyssey*,’ the ‘*Iliad*’—for surely they should have been included—the Odes of Pindar, the tragedies of Æschylus and Sophocles do indeed stand at the head of the religious poetry of the world; for they appeal, not as the poetry of Hebraism mainly appeals, to a peculiar people under peculiar conditions, not mainly to the heart and the imagination, as the poetry of mediæval Christianity does, not, as much of the later Greek poetry, to the senses and the understanding, but, as Arnold puts it, to the imaginative reason.

<sup>1</sup> *Nem.* VI, 1-7.

Their religion, it is true, rather irradiated and gave picturesqueness to life, as the ally of reason, than cast, as the ally of faith, a glory over death. It is very doubtful whether, speaking generally, they believed in the immortality of the soul; probably not, for they are, as a rule, silent on the subject on occasions where, had they held the belief seriously, it should have found expression, in their funeral poems, funeral orations, consolations and epitaphs. But this is certain, that with the exception of Homeric presentations (and Plato justly and severely blames Homer for employing fiction to make Death gloomy and terrible), Reason robbed Death of its terrors for them as effectually as Faith has modified those terrors for the Christian. The last paragraphs of Socrates' speech in the 'Apology' may be taken as typical of their general attitude and the death-bed speech of Cyrus in Xenophon's *Cyropaedia*.

And now let us pass to other points. Prominent among the qualities which strike us everywhere in the Greek temper and character are refined good sense, simplicity, sincerity, reason—keen, lucid intelligence. Taking the world as they find it and looking facts and life in the face steadily and honestly, they draw their conclusions and shape conduct and action. They do not base action, as professing Christians so often do, on hollow and pompous hypotheses, but on the reasonableness of the thing and on good sense. Basing their conduct on simple reason and expediency, on the deductions of experience and on the nature of

things, they require no collateral security for virtue, but are quite satisfied with the fact that it *pays* (λυσίτελεϊ) and is seemly. This is admirably illustrated in Sarpedon's speech to Glaucus ('Iliad' xii, 310-328).

This reliance on naked reason, as distinguished from mere sentiment, is sometimes even comically illustrated, as in the story told by Herodotus of the wife of Intaphernes. Darius condemns Intaphernes and all his family to death, but, moved by the tears of the wife of Intaphernes, he allows her to choose what member of the family is to be allowed to live. She chooses her brother, not her husband nor any of her children: "O King, I may have another husband if God will, and other children, but as my father and mother are no longer alive I cannot by any means have another brother."<sup>1</sup> And Antigone uses precisely the same argument to justify her devotion to her dead brother.<sup>2</sup> This calm spirit of reasonableness is sometimes sublimely illustrated, as in Solon's definition of happiness to Croesus.<sup>3</sup>

It was this refined good sense, this lucid intelligence and reason which directed them in their theories of the aim of education, their investigations, their studies, their notions of the relation of knowledge to wisdom, of book-learning to life—'Ο χρήσιμ' εἰδώς οὐχ ὁ πόλλ' εἰδώς σοφός (he who knows what is useful, not he who knows much, is wise), and Πολυμαθίη οὐ ποιεῖ νόον (much learning does not produce intelligence)—opinions which they have embodied in so many

<sup>1</sup> Herodotus III, 119. <sup>2</sup> Antigone, 909-912. <sup>3</sup> Herodotus I, 32.

aphorisms and proverbs. Knowing well how short is life, how long is art, how vast the sphere in which curiosity may range, taking so correctly the measure of the relative value of the subjects on which man's mind can be employed, and the measure of what can be attained in their best days, the Greeks never deviated into the barren and unprofitable studies in which we are so often absorbed. They directed education to its proper ends, the development, the culture, the discipline of those instincts and faculties which enable, or tend to enable, a man to secure the greatest possible happiness for himself, and by implication for all who are associated with him in all the various relations of domestic and political life. They did not subordinate what is proper for the man and the citizen to what is proper for the specialist and mere scholar, who are needed, are indeed indispensable, in every civilized community, but who after all do not perform the highest function in the work of education. They studied, they admired, they drew inspiration and nourishment from the Homeric poems, but in their best days, which alone concern us now, they did not waste time in muddling themselves and others with theories about their authorship. They did not confound antiquities with history, nor substitute mere knowledge of facts crammed up from musty chronicles for the living lessons which genius has deduced from them. With what pitying contempt would that large sane intelligence have regarded our Baconian-Shakespeare controversies, our editions of

Shakespeare's plays copiously annotated with a view to various examinations, our Mediæval and Modern Languages Triposes, our text-books and examination papers on English History and English Literature ! Strange fate ! that they should themselves, their literature and their language, have fallen into the hands of pedants and have been degraded to the service of the Helots of education and culture, known to us as philologists, known to them, among other titles of vituperative contempt as

Γωνιοβόμβυκες μονοσύλλαβοι, οἷσι μέμηλε  
τὸ σφὶν καὶ τὸ σφῶν καὶ τὸ μὶν ἤδὲ τὸ νίν.<sup>1</sup>

(Buzzers in corners, peddlers in monosyllables.)

And one other point let us emphasize, their scrupulous literary and artistic conscientiousness, their loyalty to the intellectual dignity of man, their lofty standard of excellence, their intolerance of the second-rate and mediocre, their disdain for the man who aimed at less than the highest. What a standard they expected and attained. Notoriety and fame were never confounded then, there were no short cuts to the gratification of literary vanity, nothing of the comfortable

"Ode, Didactic, Epic, Sonnet,  
Mr Hayley, you're divine."

No poet could hope for the homage of his fellow-citizens who did not devote his whole life, not to poetry generally, but to some particular branch. So with Oratory, Criticism, History. Would you

<sup>1</sup> Herodicus the Babylonian quoted by Athenæus.

know what a true typical Greek thought of life's arena and life's prizes, read Aristotle's 'Ode to Virtue,' or take what Simonides says: "There is a saying that excellence once dwelt on rocks hard to scale, and that now the precincts of the gods guard her, and that the eyes of no man behold her, save his only who is acquainted with the outpouring of heart-stinging sweat and reaches the highest pitch of manhood." "Think," says Longinus to the young writer, "think how Homer might have expressed this or that, or how Plato or Demosthenes or Thucydides would have clothed it with sublimity. For by our fixing an eye of rivalry on those high examples they will become like beacons to guide us and will perhaps lift up our souls to the fullness of the stature we conceive. And it would be still better should we try to realize this further thought, 'How would Homer, had he been here, or how would Demosthenes have listened to what I have written?' For what higher incentive to exertion could a writer have than to imagine such judges or such an audience of his works and to give an account of his writings with heroes like these to criticise and look on."<sup>1</sup>

Books, says Swift, give the same turn to our minds as good company gives to our manners and behaviour. Now need I point out what beneficial results intimacy, in whatever degree, with a language and literature marked by such characteristics, penetrated with such sentiments as these, is calculated to

<sup>1</sup> 'On the Sublime,' XIV.

effect? It is the glory of our countrymen and the glory of the Teutonic nations generally that they have many virtues and excellences in which the Greeks were signally deficient; but it is our reproach also that in the virtues and excellences in which the Greeks excelled we are as signally wanting. And our defects have been, as you know, very disagreeably indicated by Matthew Arnold. He tells us that on the side of beauty and taste we are distinguished by vulgarity, on the side of morality and feeling by coarseness, and on the side of mind and spirit by unintelligence. Now whether this be so or whether this be not so in the abstract, it is true with a modification. It is true if we be tried by a Greek standard, and we shall greatly gain, gain in good and gain in pleasure, if we can come to try ourselves by this standard and insist on its application. To bring ourselves into contact with that lucid intelligence, that refined good sense, that sobriety, sanity and measure, that insistence on high tests of achievement and aims, those noble and beautiful ideals cannot but be of immense benefit to us. And in considering the discipline most proper for the student of art and literature, it is doubtful whether discipline equal to this can be found elsewhere; for it calls into play all the faculties which need development and cultivation. In studying the language, concentrated accuracy and scrupulous care are exacted from the student, but exacted from him in a delightful task, for he knows that, if painful, they are but as the bitter roots to

the tree whose fruit is sweet. He knows that what is troublesome in it is worth the trouble. In studying the literature of Greece he finds himself at every step face to face with what appeals to him as a man, emotionally, intellectually; and so his reason and intellect are developed; his sympathies are awakened, enlarged, refined; he is really educated and his education has been a delight. And he will understand the truth of Plato's remark—a remark which in the face of our present conception of education seems a paradox, and a very dangerous and mischievous paradox—"No trace of slavery ought to mix with the studies of the free-born man. For the constrained performance of bodily labours does, it is true, exert no evil influence on the body: but in the case of the mind no study pursued under compulsion abides in the memory." Note, too, how the Greeks taught a love of knowledge for its own sake, denying the name of education (*παιδεία*) to that which is learnt not for its own sake but for the sake of some extrinsic gain (see Plato *Repub.*, 536E, *Legg.* i, p. 644 A, Aristotle, *Pol.* viii, c. 2, Donaldson's 'New Cratylus,' chapter i, § 4.)

It is almost impossible to give an adequate estimate of the historical value of the study of Greek. That all modern civilization rests on a Greek basis is sufficiently attested by the number of Greek terms of art in every European language to be found in the terminology of every science and art. The Greeks originated almost all species of poetry and

distinguished them by such names as Epic, Dramatic, Lyric, Didactic, Elegy, Epigram, Bucolic. They produced the greatest masterpieces of oratory and history and philosophical dialogue. Aristotle, Dionysius and Longinus laid the foundations of literary criticism. Xenophon in his *Cyropaedia* and Plato in his 'Republic' gave models for future political romances. All modern logic and metaphysics are traceable to Plato and Aristotle and their successors down to the age of Philo Judaeus and the Neoplatonists. Geometry is inseparably connected with the name of Euclid. It is hardly necessary to remind you of what the Greeks effected in painting, sculpture, architecture and music. In science they were not quite so pre-eminent above all other nations. But medicine owes much to Hippocrates and Galen, natural history to Aristotle, experimental physics to Archimedes. Eratosthenes raised geography to a science and the old world derived the Ptolemaic system from Hipparchus.

Is the acquisition of Greek popularly speaking feasible? Is there really much demand for it? To this it may be replied in the words of Dr. Johnson that "Greek is like lace. Every man gets as much of it as he can." With the progress of taste and intelligence, the demand for Greek education will become stronger and stronger. "Greek will come, I hope, some day to be studied more rationally than at present, but it will be increasingly studied as men increasingly feel the need in them for beauty, and how

powerfully Greek Art and Greek Literature can serve this need." Yes, that ancestor of ours, that hairy quadruped furnished with a tail and pointed ears and probably arboreal in his habits, not only developed somehow a capacity for what is Greek, but has transmitted that faculty to his remote posterity.

## LECTURE II

## INTRODUCTION OF GREEK INTO ENGLAND

THE year 322 B.C., the year in which Aristotle and Demosthenes died, may be said to mark the time at which the great original work of Greece had been done. Much valuable and memorable work had still to be produced—the best poetry of the Alexandrian School, the history of Polybius, the biographies of Plutarch, the dialogues of Lucian, the treatise attributed to Longinus, and this would bring us to the middle of the third century A.D.—but all the great original work had been completed by B.C. 322. The Old Literature may be said to have terminated when Justinian closed the schools of pagan philosophy in A.D. 529. Between that event and the capture of Constantinople by the Turks in 1453 stretched a long dreary period filled by ecclesiastical homilies and dissertations, compilations and commentaries and criticisms on the Old Classics, and wretched poems written in what were called *στίχοι πολιτικοί* or verses framed according to rhythm and not quantity, and side by side with these, histories and poems modelled on the style of the Old Classics: a literature represented in a word by the later Byzantine historians and poets. You may read about them in the Dissertation in Berington's 'Literary History of the

Middle Ages,' in Donaldson's continuation of Müller's 'History of Greek Literature,' and in the pages of Gibbon. After 1453 the language, long wretchedly corrupted, passed entirely into Romaic, and the Romaic Literature has of course gone on in unbroken continuity to the present day.

The three principal causes that disseminated Greek were :—

1. The conquests of Alexander the Great and the breaking up of his empire into various principalities, the three chief kingdoms being Macedonia, Asia, Egypt.

2. The absorption of Greek culture by the Romans commencing in the interval between the First and Second Punic Wars and culminating in the reduction of Greece to a Roman province in 146 B.C. From that time the study of Greek became co-extensive with the civilized world, following Roman possession wherever culture was represented. It is remarkable, as Milman says, that after the age of Juvenal and Quintilian Latin Literature seems to have been in a state of suspended animation from the beginning of the second century during the reigns of Hadrian, Antoninus Pius, Marcus Aurelius. From Juvenal to Claudian there was scarcely a single Latin poet. All this time Latin was mainly confined to jurisprudence.

3. Its connexion with Christianity, which was due to the fact that the Septuagint had been translated into Greek some time between B.C. 298 and 285,

that the New Testament was written in Greek, and that all those who propagated Christianity employed Greek. For nearly the whole of the first three centuries almost all the Church of the West was purely Greek in language, Greek in its organization, its scriptures, its liturgy.

From the first to the fifth century the Universities of Athens, Tarsus, Berytus and Antioch were crowded with students from all parts of the civilized world, and the anniversary of Plato's birthday was regularly celebrated with enthusiasm (see Milman's 'Latin Christianity,' vol. i, p. 32). But with the irruptions of the Barbarians in the fifth century Greek began rapidly to lose ground. The Barbarians did not take to it, Christian teachers began to write in Latin and not in Greek, and the Pontificate of Leo I, 440-461, may be said to mark the point when Latin completely superseded Greek as the language of the Church. The division of the Roman Empire into the Empire of the West and the Empire of the East under Honorius and Arcadius in A.D. 395 had already indicated a differentiation, as it were, between the divisions of the world in which the Greek and Latin languages would be employed. After the Schools of Athens were suppressed by Justinian (in 529) and the Schools of Alexandria by the Mahomedans, and Egypt and Syria had been conquered by them in the seventh century, Thessalonica and Constantinople were the only cities in which Greek culture was maintained, for it must be remembered that the

only Greek writings that attracted the Mahomedans were those on mathematics, physics and metaphysics. Greek history and belles-lettres they despised and did all in their power to extirpate. And soon Constantinople became the sole centre and repository of Greek culture, if we except a few monasteries in the Levant and in Calabria. "Constantinople," says Gibbon, "was enlightened by the genius of Homer and Demosthenes, of Aristotle and Plato, and in the enjoyment or neglect of our present riches we must envy the generation that could still peruse the history of Theopompus, the orations of Hyperides, the comedies of Menander and the odes of Alcæus and Sappho. The frequent labour of illustration attests not only the existence but the popularity of the Grecian classics."

But the Byzantine Greeks were not worthy of the treasures they had inherited and possessed. The better sort assiduously studied the Ancient Classics, and spoke and wrote ancient Greek. The celebrated scholar, Francis Philelphus, in one of his letters well describes what was no doubt characteristic of the Byzantines always. "The vulgar speech has been depraved by the people and infected by the multitude of strangers and merchants who every day flock to the city and mingle with the inhabitants. But the Greeks who have escaped the contagion are those whom we follow. In familiar discourse they still speak the tongue of Aristophanes and Euripides, of the historians and philosophers of

Athens. The persons who by their birth and offices are attached to the Byzantine Court are those who maintain with the least alloy the ancient standard of elegance and purity, and the native graces of language most conspicuously shine among the noble matrons who are excluded from all intercourse with foreigners. And," he adds in another passage, "my wife Theodora expresses herself in the most musical, sweet and thoroughly Attic idiom."

Now, considering how widely Greek had once been disseminated, it is of course very probable that there always existed in various parts of the world here and there some scholars, and even some seminaries, where the ancient language was preserved and studied. There is, for example, a tradition that it was cultivated during the dark ages in the monasteries of Ireland. It was in A.D. 445 that St. Patrick founded an archiepiscopal see at Armagh, and this was followed by the foundation of several monasteries in which, so it was said, the sacred flame of Greek knowledge was kept steadily burning. Certain it is that it was an Irish monk, Columban, educated at the monastery of Bangor, who afterwards founded the famous seminary of Bobbio, near Pavia, about A.D. 612, and another Irish monk founded the monastery of St. Gallen, near the Lake of Constance, about A.D. 614.

There is no clear evidence of the introduction of Greek learning into Anglo-Saxon England before the latter half of the seventh century, although some of

the missionaries who, with Augustine, came to Kent in 597 may have been Greek scholars.

The year 669 was noteworthy for the arrival in England of Theodore of Tarsus, seventh archbishop of Canterbury. He was accompanied by Benedict Biscop, an English monk of noble birth, and was soon followed by Hadrian, a learned African monk who had previously been offered and refused the archbishopric. Theodore, like his two friends Benedict and Hadrian, was an accomplished Greek scholar. They are said to have brought over with them a large number of Greek MSS., among which were the poems of Homer. Theodore founded a school for the study of Greek, and both Hadrian and Biscop taught in the school. This school was followed by the foundation of others, and in a few years libraries well-stored with Greek books are said to have been founded in Kent and Northumberland.

Of Brihtwald (650-731), who succeeded Theodore as Archbishop of Canterbury, Bede says: "He was a man whose knowledge of the Greek, Latin and Saxon learning was manifold and thorough." Aldhelm (d. 709), Bishop of Sherborne, also was a good Greek scholar; indeed it was said of him that he had mastered all the idioms of the Greek language and wrote and spoke it as though he were a Greek by birth. Tobias (d. 726), Bishop of Rochester, is described by Bede as being as familiar with Greek as with his mother tongue. Wilfrid (634-709), Bishop of York, Bede (672-735) and Alcuin (735-804)

are all reported to have been excellent Greek scholars. Bede's testimony to the extent to which Greek was disseminated is very remarkable. "There are still," he writes, "living to this day some of these scholars who are as well versed in the Greek and Latin tongues as in their own in which they were born." But it must be confessed that there are no proofs to support this testimony. With one possible exception there is not the smallest trace of any Greek influence on Anglo-Saxon Literature, nay there are very few traces of any knowledge of Greek in their extant writings. It is probable that a very slight acquaintance with it went a long way, as it generally has done, and that merely to read it in the sense of understanding the pronunciation was held to constitute a fair claim to be called a Greek scholar. Their position was that of Byron's learned lady:—

"She knew the Latin—that is, the Lord's prayer,  
And Greek—the alphabet—I'm nearly sure."<sup>1</sup>

In the educational schemes of Alfred the Great, Greek has no place.

We may, however, lay claim to one man who did know Greek in the ninth century—John Scotus Erigena. He was born somewhere between 800–815 in Ireland, and there educated. The greater part of his life was spent at the Court of Charles the Bald, but, as he was born and educated in Ireland, he belongs to the history of Great Britain. Of him William of Malmesbury said that his mental vision was

<sup>1</sup> 'Don Juan,' l, xiii.

concentrated on the Greeks "in Græcos acriter oculos intendit." His works conclusively prove that he was very familiar with Aristotle, Plato and the Neoplatonists. One of his chief treatises has a Greek title, *περὶ φύσεων μερισμοῦ*, and he translated from the Greek the treatises of Dionysius the Areopagite, the pseudo-Dionysius.

The Norman Conquest brought about a Latin Renaissance in England in which Greek had no part. The great representative of belletristic teaching at this era was John the Grammarian, who educated many of the sons of the Norman and English nobility. He wrote commentaries on some of the Latin Poets, a treatise on metre, and some Latin poetry, but Greek had no part in his teaching. Warton was wrong in supposing he knew Greek, for the Greek poems attributed to him belong really to Johannes Philoponus, an Alexandrian scholar who flourished at the beginning of the seventh century. An excellent test of the state of learning in the twelfth century is afforded by the *Polycraticon* of John of Salisbury (circa 1116-1180), in which we find wide and familiar knowledge of Latin Classics but gross ignorance of Greek, which is all the more conspicuous because of his ostentatious display of learning.

The dawn of a Greek Renaissance began to appear in Western Europe in the thirteenth century. This may mainly be attributed to the capture of Constantinople by the Latins in 1204, as a result of which many Greeks came westward to Italy and France.

Under the great Frederic II (1215–1250) there was in Sicily and Italy a distinct Greek Renaissance, and in the University of Naples, which was founded by him in 1224, he provided for instruction in Greek. He ordered the works of Aristotle to be translated and under his liberal and fostering care there seems to have been every indication that the Great Renaissance of the fifteenth century would be anticipated. About the same time, at the instigation of Pope Innocent III, who wished to convert the heretical Greek Church, Philip Augustus established in the newly founded University of Paris a College of Constantinople for the education of young Greeks and for their instruction in the language, the creed and ritual of the West. They of course brought with them their own language, and Greek began to be taught in France. Greek instruction was given, no doubt, in a desultory and casual manner. But this was certainly the first great step to the introduction of adequate Greek instruction in the West. A torch lighted in France was of course also a torch lighted in England, and from this epoch, this thirteenth century, we begin to have many clear indications of Greek study and of interest in Greek learning among English scholars. Robert Grossetête (1175–1253), Bishop of Lincoln, *vir in Latino et Graeco peritissimus*, as Matthew Paris, his contemporary, describes him, did all he could to advance the study of Greek. With this object he let it be understood by the clergy that a knowledge of Greek would form in his eyes a claim to promotion. He is said to

have translated the lexicon of Suidas into Latin, to aid these studies. He is said also to have translated into Latin the treatises of Dionysius the Areopagite, and, what is still more interesting, the Nicomachean Ethics of Aristotle. One of his protégés, John of Basingstoke (d. 1252), was promoted by him to the archdeaconry of Leicester because he was a Greek scholar. He had studied Greek, not only at Paris but also at Athens, and translated from the Greek into Latin a Greek Grammar, which he called *Donatus Græcorum*. The Chaplain of Robert Grossetête's palace, one Nicholas, was surnamed Græcus on account of his knowledge of Greek. Nor was this all. The great Friar Bacon (circa 1214–1292), his contemporary, not only was familiar with Greek Philosophy, particularly with Aristotle, but was also the compiler of a Greek Grammar and a Greek Lexicon, and Michael Scot was thoroughly acquainted with many of the writings of Aristotle, and, though he appears to have acquired his knowledge through Latin translations and to have been unacquainted with the Greek language, he was employed by Frederic II in the translations which that monarch ordered to be made of Aristotle's works.

But the Renaissance of the thirteenth century, premature everywhere, was premature in this country also, and Greek appears to have made no advance in England during the fourteenth century. Neither in Chaucer nor in Gower, the most cultivated men of their age, do we find any trace of a knowledge of Greek. Even

Wycliffe and his coadjutors, though professionally men of learning, appear to have been ignorant of Greek, and in their translation of the Bible they do not seem even to have consulted the Greek text. But one exception there was, and that is a striking one, Richard of Aungerville, Richard of Bury (1281-1345). In his *Philobiblon* he displays not only a very intimate acquaintance with Aristotle and other Greek philosophers, but a knowledge of the language itself. He gives his book a Greek title and uses correctly Greek words, and he pleads for the study of Greek, pointing out how the Roman Classics are but the reflection of the Greek. "Ignorance," he says, "of the Greek language is to this day highly injurious to the study of the Latins, without which the dogmas neither of the ancient Christians nor the Gentiles can be comprehended." He strongly advocates the study of Greek because of its importance in literature, philosophy and theology. To further the study of Greek and Hebrew he had, he said, "taken care to provide for his library, which he threw open to all scholars, a Hebrew as well as a Greek Grammar with certain adjuncts, by the help of which studious readers may be instructed in writing, reading and understanding the said languages."

Richard of Bury's remonstrances had no effect, and during the fourteenth and the greater part of the fifteenth century Greek appears to have been totally neglected. We have many accounts of the studies pursued or professed at the Universities

during the fourteenth and first half of the fifteenth century, but there is no mention at all of Greek. In the Paston Letters we have notices of the books ordinarily read at schools and by educated people, but no Greek book appears among them. Nothing coming from the Greek, even in the way of translation, appears among the publications of Caxton. In 1420 Poggio Bracciolini visited England, and in his forty-third epistle gives a deplorable picture of the state of learning. Even Latin had sunk very low owing to the barbarous introduction of English words miserably metamorphosed by Latin terminations. Thus William of Wycester or Worcester (1415-1482 ?) tells us that the Duke of York "arrivavit apud Redbank" and that the King "adjornavit parliamentum." Anthony Wood, describing the state of learning at Oxford as late as the year 1508, says: "The Greek language from whence the greater part of knowledge is derived was at a very low ebb or in a manner forgotten." And Hallam, commenting on this passage says: "The word 'forgotten' is improperly applied to Greek, which had never been known." In the universities and monastic seminaries the fate of Greek had always been to be dismissed with the same verdict—*Graecum est, non potest legi*.

But at the end of the fourteenth century came the dawn, and with the next century the glorious daylight of Greek knowledge in England began to appear. For we have now arrived at the time when England was influenced by the full stream of the Renaissance.

The introduction of Greek learning into Europe, and its dissemination and establishment in the modern world were brought about in the following manner.

Many causes, into which we need not enter, awoke Italy from the long intellectual lethargy in which she was sunk during the latter half of the thirteenth and the first half of the fourteenth century. The learned ardour and curiosity of the two men with whose names the introduction of Greek learning is associated, Petrarch and Boccaccio, moved them to obtain a knowledge of that language and literature which had, as they knew, inspired and moulded the literature with which they were familiar, the literature of the Romans. A Calabrian monk taught, or rather attempted to teach, Petrarch Greek, and a friend of Barlaamo's, Leontio Pilato, initiated Boccaccio in the same language.

The enthusiasm of Petrarch and Boccaccio communicated itself to others, but Greek could not make much way till competent teachers and in sufficient numbers could be found, and till Greek MSS. could be obtained. But at this time Constantinople had the monopoly in these things, and it was a monopoly which had been most jealously guarded, owing to the hostility between the Pope and the Patriarch.

Ever since the Iconoclastic Controversy in the latter part of the eighth century the Eastern and Western Churches had become estranged, and just after the Nicene Synod in A.D. 787 the Eastern and

Western Churches were formally separated, and on the coronation of Charlemagne in 800 the schism was completed and confirmed, and afterwards complicated by doctrines which either Church adopted and the other Church pronounced to be deadly heresies. The hostility of the two great divisions of the Christian Church not only prevented the importation of Greek MSS. into the West, but also made the Latin Christians unwilling to help the Eastern Christians against the Ottoman Turks who, in the end of the fourteenth century, were advancing rapidly in their career of conquest. In 1396 Constantinople was invested by land and sea. In 1400 Manuel Chrysoloras went on an embassy to France and England and pleaded for assistance against the Mahomedans. The overthrow of Constantinople was postponed for a time owing to the defeat of Bajazet by the Tartars under Timour, at the battle of Angora in 1402. In 1422 the dangers of Turkish conquest were renewed on the accession of Amurath II. In 1438 John Palaeologus with the Patriarch of Constantinople and twenty-two Bishops of the Greek clergy came to Ferrara and submitted to the papal supremacy in the hope of obtaining military support. But the Greeks at home were indignant at the idea of being subject to the Pope, and the conference practically came to nothing. Constantinople was abandoned to her fate and was captured by the Turks in 1453. Before this date many Greek scholars, seeing the imminent ruin of the Eastern Empire, had sought refuge in Western Europe and

taken Greek MSS. with them. They fled westwards in still larger numbers after the fall of the capital and were welcomed in the Italian universities. Now began the golden age of culture in Italy, which lasted from the middle of the fifteenth century to about the year 1527, when Rome was sacked by the Imperialists and the Medici were a second time expelled from Florence. The further dissemination of culture during this period was promoted by the Italian wars of Charles VIII, who entered Italy in 1494, and of his successor Louis XII.

We have now to see how the torch of Greek culture, that had been lighted in Italy, was passed on to England. There was a considerable band of English scholars in Italy towards the end of the fifteenth century. One of the earliest was Robert Fleming (d. 1483), nephew of the founder of Lincoln College. He is said to have studied Greek at Ferrara under Baptista Guarino and to have compiled a Græco-Latin Dictionary. The names of most of these English students of Greek in Italy are summed up by Leland, the antiquary, in the following lines :—

“*Lumina doctrinae Grocinus, deinde secutus  
Sellingus, Linacer, Latimarusque pius,  
Tunstallus, Phoenix, Stocleius atque Coletus,  
Lilius et Paceus, festa corona virum.  
Omnes Italiam petierunt sidere fausto  
Et nituit Latii Musa Britannia scholis.  
Omnes inque suam patriam rediere diserti,  
Secum thesauros et retulere suos,  
Nempe antiquorum scripta exemplaria passim  
Graecorum, aeternas quae meruere cedros.*”

William Grocyn, born at Bristol in 1442, was educated at Winchester and at New College, Oxford. He became Prebendary of Lincoln in 1485. In or about 1488 he went to Italy to learn Greek and settled at Florence where he became the pupil of Politiano and Demetrius Chalcondyles. Returning to England an accomplished Greek scholar, and an enthusiastic Aristotelian, he began to lecture on Greek at Oxford in 1491, thereby inaugurating the beginning of a new era in English university education.

William Sellynge, or Selling (d. 1494) Fellow of All Souls, followed or perhaps preceded Grocyn in visiting Italy for instruction in Greek. He studied first at Bologna and subsequently at Florence. On his return he settled at Canterbury, where he became prior of the monastery of Christ Church, and to that monastery he presented a large number of Greek MSS. His tomb is still to be seen in Canterbury Cathedral with the epitaph:—

“Doctor Theologus Selling Græca atque Latina  
Lingua perdoctus.”

Closely linked with him is Dr. Thomas Linacre, founder and first President of the Royal College of Physicians. Introduced by Selling to Politiano, he was introduced by Politiano to Lorenzo De Medici, and shared with Lorenzo's children the instruction of Politiano and Demetrius Chalcondyles. On his return to England he taught Greek at Oxford: he translated several of the treatises of Galen from the Greek into Latin and was universally admitted to be

one of the foremost classical scholars in England. Next comes the great name of John Colet, the founder of St. Paul's School. Born in 1466 and educated at Magdalen College, Oxford, he proceeded between 1493 and 1496 to visit Italy that he might master Greek. It was Greek in its relation to theology which attracted him most; and he gave his first attention to divinity and metaphysics, to the New Testament, to the Epistles of St. Paul and to the writings of the pseudo-Dionysius. On his return he lectured on these subjects at Oxford, and among his pupils and listeners were Sir Thomas More and Erasmus. An epoch in English theology was formed by these lectures. In 1505 Colet succeeded to his father's large fortune, a large portion of which he devoted to the foundation of St. Paul's School in 1509. In the instructions which he drew up for the direction of the sort of education he contemplates we are concerned only with one clause. The scholars are to be instructed not merely in the best Latin Classics, but in the Greek, such authors to be chosen as have with wisdom joined pure chaste eloquence. And for the first Headmaster he chose a man who is entitled to a high place among the restorers of Greek learning—William Lilly. Born about 1468, Lilly had become a demy of Magdalen College, Oxford. He had then resided for five years at Rhodes, where he had been taught Greek by some of the Byzantine exiles. On his return to England he had set up a little school of his own in London where he taught Greek—being the

first teacher of Greek in London. Passing by William Latimer, Fellow of All Souls, who had also studied Greek in Italy and who had the honour of teaching Erasmus Greek at Oxford, we come to Dr. Richard Pace, one of the most eminent diplomatists in the service of Henry VIII, an accomplished Grecian who has left an excellent version of some of the minor treatises of Plutarch.

John Clement was, perhaps, the first official teacher of Greek at the University of Oxford. He was appointed by Cardinal Wolsey in 1519 to be Reader of Rhetoric, and afterwards became Reader of Greek. We must next mention Thomas Lupsett, who settled at Corpus Christi, Oxford, about 1519, and became Reader of Rhetoric and Greek at Oxford in succession to Clement in 1520 ; Edward Wotton, appointed Reader of Greek at Corpus Christi College in 1521 ; Cuthbert Tunstall, afterwards Bishop of Durham ; Dr. Stokesley, Principal of Magdalen Hall, and afterwards Bishop of London.

Without dwelling long on these and other minor names we pass on to the revival of Greek Scholarship at Cambridge, which was largely due to Dr. Richard Croke (1489-1558). A member of Eton and a scholar of King's College, Cambridge, he migrated to Oxford and became one of Grocyn's pupils and was also one of the instructors of Erasmus. From Oxford he passed over to the continental universities and in Germany, where he lectured for some time at Leipsic, he gained the reputation of being the

first to teach Greek in a rational and profitable manner. "Croke," writes Erasmus, June 5, 1514, "holds sway in the University of Leipsic, giving public lectures on Greek Literature." On his return he was appointed Teacher of Greek to the King. In 1519 he became Professor of Greek at Cambridge. His *Oratio de Graecarum Disciplinarum Laudibus* and his *Oratio quâ Cantabrigienses est hortatus ne Graecarum Litterarum desertores essent* were published in 1520. He also published in the same year an Introduction to the Greek Language. Other scholars, whose names are associated with the early study of Greek at Cambridge were Henry Bullock (d. 1526), John Bryan (d. 1545), Robert Aldrich (d. 1556), Richard Whitford (d. 1555) and Richard Simpson (d. 1554).

Next to Croke no man gave a greater impulse to the study of Greek than Sir John Cheke, Professor of Greek at Cambridge between 1540-1551. He went through, we are told, all Homer, all Euripides, and all Sophocles twice in his public teaching and was never weary of dilating in his conversation and lectures on the beauties of Demosthenes, Xenophon, Plato and Isocrates. With him must be coupled Sir Thomas Smith (1513-1577), who was equally indefatigable in his efforts to inspire and impart Hellenic enthusiasm and learning, and who succeeded Cheke in the Greek Chair. It was these two scholars who were the protagonists in the great controversy between the Etacists and the Itacists, as they were called. The controversy really involved the question

of the pronunciation of the Greek vowels, eta, upsilon, epsilon and iota, but it derived its name from a single point in the controversy, viz., whether eta should be pronounced like the continental  $\bar{i}$  (and our *ee* in *feet*) or like the continental  $\bar{e}$  (and our *a* in *fate*), the former or Reuchlinian view being held by the Itacists, the latter or Erasmian view by the Etacists. The controversy became so furious that Bishop Gardiner, the Chancellor of the University, intervened, and imposed by statute that the eta should be sounded like  $\bar{i}$ . But Bishop Gardiner was wrong; we know from a line in a Greek comic poet (Cratinus) that eta cannot have been sounded like  $\bar{i}$ , because coupled with beta it is used to imitate the bleating of a sheep—and so, as Gibbon wittily observes, a bell-wether is better evidence than a bishop or a chancellor.

Thus Greek advanced apace, and, owing to the efforts of these enthusiasts, Ascham could write in a letter to be dated about 1535, speaking of Cambridge, that “Aristotle and Plato are read by boys; Sophocles and Euripides are as familiar as Plautus used to be, and Herodotus, Thucydides and Xenophon are read fluently.”

Among the earliest patrons of Greek scholarship was Richard Fox, Bishop of Durham, and afterwards of Winchester, who in 1516 founded and endowed Corpus Christi College, Oxford, and instituted in the following year a Greek lectureship, drawing up himself a list of the Greek authors who were to be read and interpreted. Edward Wotton, fellow of

Magdalen, was the first Greek scholar whose appointment (in 1521) to this lectureship is recorded. For the further promotion of the new learning Bishop Fox invited to the College Lupsett, Pace and other Greek scholars. Knowing, however, the opposition which the academic authorities would raise to the innovation, he defended what he had done by asserting that the sacred canons had commanded that a knowledge of the Greek tongue should not be wanting in public seminaries of education, referring to a decree of the Council of Vienne, in 1311, which enjoined that professorships in Greek, Hebrew, and Arabic should be instituted. In 1519 his example was followed by Cardinal Wolsey, who founded and endowed with ample salaries lectureships in Greek, as well as in Latin and Rhetoric. At Cambridge the Cardinal Archbishop Fisher, then the head of Queen's College, did all he could to encourage the study of Greek, and it was at his invitation that Croke was invited to fill the first Chair of Greek. But Greek had no firmer friend than Henry VIII. This is well illustrated by a story told by Erasmus in one of his letters. A divine preaching before Henry VIII raved against Greek. Pace glanced at the King to see how he took it, and received a pleasant smile in reply. After service Sir Thomas More, getting into conversation with the divine, eloquently defended Greek, and the King seemed inclined to take part in the discussion. Then the divine, realizing the position of affairs, fell on his knees and said some spirit had

inspired him to launch out against Greek. "The spirit," replied the King, "was not of Christ but a spirit of foolishness." The divine tried to improve matters by acknowledging his belief in the derivation of Greek from Hebrew. The King marvelled at the egregious stupidity of the man and dismissed him, only forbidding him ever to preach at court again. "Would that we had any prince like this," remarked Erasmus.

Passing from the universities to the schools, we find that Greek was taught in London at St. Paul's as early as 1512, under Lilly; at Eton under Udal in 1535; at Westminster by Nowell, afterwards Dean of St. Paul's, in 1543; at Merchant Taylors under Mulcaster in 1562. In 1541 the King issued a royal ordinance that Greek should be taught at the grammar schools attached to the Cathedrals. After that date and to the end of the century, instructions were often left by the founders of schools that Greek should have a place in the curriculum. For example, on the Statutes of Witton School in Cheshire, as early as 1588, the founder enacts: "I will there were always taught good Literature both in Latin and Greek." But with all this fair and promising appearance Greek cannot have made very much general progress owing to the want of good grammars, dictionaries and texts. Still, much may have been done by colloquial instruction, and this was all the instruction practically possible in the sixteenth century.

It must be remembered that the growth of Greek

scholarship was originally in England, as on the Continent, a purely extra-academic movement opposed with the utmost obstinacy and rancour by the universities. There was much local opposition to Reuchlin and Erasmus in Germany among the champions of orthodoxy, who declared that "to speak Greek is heresy." In the Netherlands arose the proverb, "Si est bonus grammaticus, est haireticus."

As Hallam puts it, "through all the palaces of Ignorance went forth a cry of terror at the coming light—A voice of weeping heard and loud laments," and owls and bats, their roosting places disturbed, became clamorous exceedingly. Organized opposition was got up both at Oxford and Cambridge against what they called the New Learning, and "'cave a Graecis ne ἀπεικός fias' was the warning of many an irate but solemn blockhead." Of these conflicts Anthony Wood gives an amusing account: "I cannot but wonder when I think of it at what a strange ignorance were the scholars arrived when as they would by no means receive this learning but rather scoff and laugh at it, some against the new pronunciation, others at the language itself, having not at all read anything thereof. It is said that there were lately a company of good fellows, Cambridge men as is reported, who, either out of hatred to the Greek tongue or of good letters, did join themselves together and call themselves Trojans; one who was the senior of the rest called himself Hector, and the rest by some ancient Trojan names who after a jocular way

did oppose as Grecians the students of the Greek tongue.”<sup>1</sup>

And now let us see how Greek—how the new learning passed from the study into life, from mere scholars to men and women of the world. I would emphasize three names in this connexion, Sir Thomas Elyot, Sir Thomas More and Roger Ascham. The ‘Book of the Governour’ (1531) brought the Greek conception of education practically before thoughtful people, and must have exercised enormous influence and given immense impulse to Greek study. It was the work of a statesman, a diplomatist and a man of the world, who knew what men needed and who knew what he was about. To the ‘Utopia’ (1516) of More belongs the same praise, and to it may be attributed the same sort of influence. It is thoroughly Greek, and Greek in the best sense of the term, tempering also Greek characteristics and qualities with what is finest and noblest in Christian sentiment and Christian thought. ‘The Schoolmaster’ of Roger Ascham (1515–1568) not only shows in itself how Greek had come to be an essential part of the intellectual fabric of the man himself, but how it was penetrating the cultivated mind of England in that day. No man contributed more to bring it into vogue among courtly and fashionable circles than Ascham. He was the tutor of Queen Elizabeth, and he tells us how, when

<sup>1</sup> For more information about Greek in England at this time see John Brinsley’s *Ludus Literarius* (1612) and the ‘New Discovery of the Old Art of Teaching School,’ by Charles Hoole (1610–1667).

Princess, she devoted the beginning of the day to the New Testament, then to select orations of Isocrates and the Tragedies of Sophocles, and how, when Queen, she read more Greek every day than some prebendaries of the Church read Latin in a whole week. He was also the tutor of Edward VI, and under him the King read the whole of the Ethics of Aristotle, and translated many passages of Cicero's philosophical writings into Greek. And let us not forget that there were, besides Queen Elizabeth, many other high-born ladies, who seized on Greek with as much avidity as the men, and became excellent scholars. Among these were Margaret Roper, who translated Eusebius into Latin and became the mother of a daughter, afterwards Lady Clark, who was as learned as herself; Lady Jane Grey; Queen Catharine Parr; the five daughters of Sir Anthony Cooke—Mildred, who married Lord Burleigh, Margaret, the wife of Sir Ralph Rowlett, Anne, who married Sir Nicholas Bacon and became the mother of Francis Bacon, Elizabeth, the wife of Sir Thomas Hoby of Bisham Abbey in Berkshire, and Katherine, the wife of Sir Henry Killigrew.

So popular was Greek at the Court of Elizabeth, that the 'Plutus' of Aristophanes was acted in the original language. By the end of the century there were translations into English of most of the works of the leading Greek historians and philosophers, such as Aristotle's 'Ethics' and 'Politics,' portions of Plato, two translations of

Xenophon's *Cyropaedia*, the *Enchiridion* of Epictetus, some Dialogues of Lucian, the 'Meditations' of Marcus Aurelius, the whole or parts of the Histories of Herodotus, Thucydides, Diodorus Siculus, Plutarch, Appian, and Polybius, the Olynthiac and Philippic orations of Demosthenes, and several of the treatises of Isocrates. There were not so many translations of Greek poetry. Before Chapman, at the end of the century began his great work as a translator, ten books of the 'Iliad' had been translated, but "out of French," by Arthur Hall. 'The Battle of the Frogs and Mice' was translated in 1579. In 1588 Sir Edward Dyer published at Oxford a version of six of the 'Idylls' of Theocritus. Several of the above translations, like the 'Iliad' of Arthur Hall, were admitted by their authors to have been made not from the original Greek, but from some more familiar language into which the authors had been previously translated. The great Greek tragedians had not yet been Englished, but were read widely in Latin translations.

But at the beginning of the seventeenth century this extraordinary enthusiasm rapidly cooled down; students at the universities, men of the world, and women of the world and of society, and those who were by profession men of letters, ceased to busy themselves with the Greek Classics; a knowledge of Greek became more and more confined to a few. Men like the Cambridge Platonists, like Andrewes, like Barrow, like Jeremy Taylor among theologians,

very serious students like Selden among antiquarians and jurists, like Hobbes and Sir Thomas Browne among philosophers, like Milton among poets, like Lord Falkland among the aristocracy, sedulously cultivated it. At the universities the name of one scholar only stands out as trying to make it popular and as being a real enthusiast in that cause, Dr. James Duport, Professor of Greek at Cambridge between 1639 and 1654. Three distinguished scholars, however, were very conspicuous in this century, namely, Thomas Gataker, whose edition of Marcus Aurelius is the first edition of a classic in England with original annotations ; Thomas Stanley, whose edition of Aeschylus in 1663 marks an epoch in critical scholarship ; and Richard Bentley, one of the greatest classical scholars, from the philological and antiquarian point of view, that this or any other country has produced. Bentley forms the link in the history of Greek scholarship between the seventeenth and eighteenth century. He was the founder or predecessor of a great dynasty of scholars : Dawes, Wasse, Taylor, Salter, Toup, Markland, Tyrwhitt, a dynasty which culminated in Porson, the Prince of Grecians. But, as in the seventeenth so in the eighteenth century, Greek had not much hold on the many. Neglected in the public schools, neglected in the universities, not required either for degrees or for ordination, it was the rarest of accomplishments ; and when Dr. Johnson said that Greek was like lace, every man gets as much of it as he can, he indicated at once its

value and the fact that it was out of the reach of most. Perhaps the only good Greek scholars among the poets and belletrists of the eighteenth century were Gray and Warton ; but Congreve, Akenside, Collins, Mason, Glover and Cowper among poets, Hurd and Harris among critics, Fielding among novelists, Gibbon among historians, Pulteney, Carteret and the two Pitts and Burke among orators knew enough of it to get inspiration and pleasure from it. Porson links the eighteenth century with the nineteenth, and he, too, like Bentley, was in his turn the founder of a great dynasty : Elmsley, Dobree, Blomfield, Gaisford, Shilleto, and that great scholar whose loss we had to deplore not long ago, Sir Richard Jebb. We have now, thanks to these and others both in Germany and England, been enabled to enter on a new era in Greek instruction and culture.

## LECTURE III

## INFLUENCE OF GREEK POETRY

IT would not be too much to say that the history of the development and characteristics of two-thirds of what is most valuable in English poetry is the history of the modification of Celtic and Teutonic elements by Classical elements.

These classical elements are almost entirely Greek, being derived either directly or indirectly from Greek Literature.

It is first necessary to distinguish between the direct influence of Greek Literature on our poetry and the indirect influence that came through a Roman medium. It must be clearly understood that Roman Literature was mainly an imitation of Greek Literature. What the moon is to the sun, that Roman is to Greek poetry. There was an indigenous literature in Rome and Latium up to about 240 B.C. Then came contact with Greece between the first and second Punic wars (242-218 B.C.). The result was that for the rude native plays represented by the *Saturae* and the *Fabulae Atellanae* were substituted tragedies and comedies, modelled in the main on the Attic tragedies and on the comedies of Philemon and Menander and their followers. The Saturnian metre gave place to the hexameter, which became in Rome, as it had been in Greece, the recognized metre of epic poetry.

In a word, in every species of poetry the Romans followed Greek models. The Roman Epics, the 'Æneid,' the 'Thebaid,' the *Argonautica* of Valerius Flaccus are modelled on the 'Iliad,' the 'Odyssey' and the *Argonautica* of Apollonius Rhodius. The first six books of the 'Æneid' are based on the 'Iliad,' the last six on the 'Odyssey.' It is the same with the Roman drama. The Roman tragedies were purely Greek. The older Roman dramatists, whose works have been lost, imitated Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides. The tragedies of Seneca, the sole intact remains of Roman tragedy, were modelled not on Attic tragedies, but on the later degenerate drama of Alexandria, on the works of the poets called ἀναγνωστικοί. In comedy Plautus was largely and Terence wholly Greek. In didactic poetry the title of the Georgics is taken from one Greek poet, Nicander, and the matter largely from the 'Works and Days' of Hesiod and partly from the poems of Aratus and Nicander. Lucretius took his philosophy from Epicurus, Xenophanes and Empedocles. In lyric poetry Horace and Catullus imitated Alcaeus, Sappho and Archilochus. The title of Ovid's 'Metamorphoses' was taken from Parthenius, and probably much of the matter came from the same poet, and from the *Heterœumena* of Nicander. Roman elegies imitated Greek elegies, especially those of Callimachus and Philetas. Latin pastorals followed the 'Idylls' of Theocritus. All the measures of classical Latin poetry were Greek, as is clear from their names, hexameter,

pentameter, Sapphic, Alcaic, hendecasyllabic, iambic. Indeed, Rome took from Greece all the nomenclature of poetry, even including the term for poet. The only important contribution to poetic literature made by the Romans was satire. "Satira tota nostra est," says Quintilian, and even this claim cannot be accepted without modification. Speaking generally, then, the whole of Roman Literature is derived from Greek Literature. As Horace says, "Captive Greece led captive her barbarous conqueror, and brought her refinements to rustic Latium." The Roman poets not only acknowledged, but even boasted of their indebtedness to Greek models.

Of course, the tone and colour of Roman poetry, imitative and reflective though it was, took its peculiarities from the Roman national character. The Greeks, that is those Greeks who produced and represented the master poets of the race, were essentially a poetical people, imaginative, emotional, exquisitely sensitive to æsthetic impression, finely touched, artistic. The Romans, on the contrary, were not a poetical people. They had not even a native word for a poet nor any proper common term to denote the class till they came into contact with Greece, for *vates* means soothsayer. Nay, their name for the poet was *grassator*—a vagabond or idler.<sup>1</sup> Their genius was essentially unimaginative, practical

<sup>1</sup> Poeticæ arti honos non erat: si qui in eâ re studebat aut sese ad convivia adplicabat, grassator vocabatur.—Cato apud Aulum Gellium xi, 2, 5.

and political ; their temper from an æsthetic point of view was coarse-fibred ; the finer aroma of poetry escaped them. And a curious illustration of this is that they were not so much attracted by the great Greek poets—by Homer, Pindar, Æschylus, Sophocles—as by the later poets of the Alexandrian schools, poets who stand pretty much in the same relation to the great masters as Dryden and Pope stand to Shakespeare and Milton.

The note of Roman poetry is rhetoric. Magnificent rhetoric was its glory and ornament, second and third-rate rhetoric was its defect and vice. As was their character, so was their literature and their language, “the voice of empire and of war”—let me quote Nelson Coleridge’s words—“of law and of the state ; inferior to its half parent and rival in the embodying of passion and in the distinguishing of thought, but equal to it in sustaining the measured march of history, and superior to it in the indignant declamation of moral satire.”

And now we must proceed to the consideration of what we must carefully discriminate, the indirect influence of Greek on our poetry, and the direct influence. Indirectly, as we have seen, we must attribute to Greek influence almost all, so far as form is concerned, which directly we must attribute to Roman influence. Take, for example, first our “classical” tragic drama as represented by ‘Gorboduc,’ our first formulated tragedy. ‘Gorboduc’ is modelled on the Latin tragedies of Seneca or possibly

on Italian imitations of those tragedies ; but the Latin tragedies of Seneca were modelled on the Greek tragedies and so, of course, by implication, were the Italian imitations of Seneca. Take, secondly, our romantic tragedy, the drama culminating in the tragedies of Shakespeare. Our romantic tragedies also originated in the imitation of the Latin tragedies of Seneca, and of Italian imitations of those tragedies ; but those in their turn were modelled on the Greek tragedies. So that back we have to go again historically to the Greek tragedies. Take comedy. The first formulated comedies, both in Italy and England, were modelled on Plautus and Terence ; but the comedies of Plautus and Terence were modelled on the New Comedy, as it was called, 'of the Greeks. Our romantic comedy, 'Twelfth Night,' for example, or 'As You Like It,' was, historically explained, a modification of Italian classical comedy ; but Italian classical comedy was a modification of the comedies of Plautus and Terence, and these, as we have seen, were modelled on the Greek comedies. So, back we have to go once more to the Attic stage here. And so it is with the epic. We may trace the English epic to the Roman epic, but what is the Roman epic but an imitation and copy of the Greek ? Ultimately then in this, and in other branches of poetry, the pastoral, for instance, we have to go back to Greece, even though immediately we need not go further than Rome.

Now, taking the whole mass of our poetry, it is

undoubtedly true that Greece has to a very considerable extent influenced us indirectly through Rome. We may explain the architecture of the English classical epic by reference to the 'Æneid,' not to the 'Iliad,' the 'Odyssey' and the *Argonautica*. Similarly we may trace the genesis of our eighteenth century pastoral to Virgil's *Bucolics*, not to Theocritus. But for all that, we have historically to go back to Virgil's models. I have said that Greece has influenced a vast mass of our poetry indirectly through Rome, and the reasons have been these. The Latin language has always come home to us more than the Greek, and Latin authors have always been better known in England than Greek authors. It is not difficult to see why this should have been so. In the first place, the English genius is much more in affinity with Rome than with Greece. Secondly, the difficulty of the Greek language has always been an impediment in the way of knowledge of Greek Literature, and this difficulty was for a long time aggravated in England by want of lexicons, grammars, and good texts, so that an intimate critical acquaintance with it was impossible till late in the eighteenth century. It may be doubted whether before Milton any of our poets, except perhaps Spenser, Chapman and Ben Jonson, travelled further in Greek scholarship than being able to follow Greek texts in Latin translations, and it may be doubted whether any other of our poets, except Congreve, between Milton and Akenside (who was certainly a fair Greek scholar, as his 'Hymn

to the Naiads' shows) had made much way in this study. Among the Elizabethan poets there is no poet so Greek in style as Marlowe. His 'Hero and Leander' is thoroughly Hellenic, and it is not so because it is on a Greek subject, but simply because of its architecture and style, for it is an original poem, not, as it is always described, a translation of the poem ascribed to Musaeus—for it is not even a paraphrase of that poem. But Marlowe's Hellenism was probably not the result of an intimate acquaintance with Greek, but was like that of Keats the result of natural temper and sympathy. On the whole, we may say with safety that familiarity with Greek poetry in the original was a rare accomplishment among English poets till about the middle of the eighteenth century, when there was a Greek Renaissance marked by Akenside, Collins, Gray, Mason, Glover and Thomas Warton.

Distinguishing, therefore, between the indirect influence of Greece and its ambiguous manifestations, I mean where it may be attributed to second-hand knowledge, let us note where it is direct and unmistakable. Perhaps the best way of dealing with it will be to trace its influence through the various branches of poetry.

Let us then consider the influence of Greek poetry on the English epic and begin with the 'Faerie Queene.' There is clear proof that Spenser knew Greek. Ludovico Brysket, the friend of Spenser, in his Introduction to his 'Discourse of Civil Life,'

says that Spenser was perfect in the Greek tongue, and "of his love and kindness encouraged me long sithens to follow the reading of the Greek tongue, and offered me his help to make me understand it." And he almost certainly translated from the Greek the dialogue entitled 'Axiochus,' wrongly attributed to Plato and to Æschines, Socrates' disciple, and he translated also the idyll of Moschus entitled 'Love the Runaway.'

On the Ethics of Aristotle is based the allegory of the 'Faerie Queene,' but to that we shall return. The whole poem is full of reminiscences from Homer, chiefly the 'Odyssey,' from Hesiod, chiefly the 'Theogony,' from the Pseudo-Orphic Hymns, and there are imitations of passages in Pindar, Apollonius Rhodius and Theocritus, and in the 'Hero and Leander' of the Pseudo-Musaeus. It would be tedious to specify and enumerate all the passages imitated and transferred from or suggested by Greek poets, but the whole poem is full of echoes from those poets, and it is plain that Spenser was familiar with them. Turning to our next great epic, 'Paradise Lost,' a thick volume would hardly suffice to illustrate fully Milton's indebtedness to the Greek poets, the greater part of whom are laid under contribution; here in elaborate parodies; there in turns of expression and epithets; now in similes and allusions; now in ideas and sentiments; in fact, reminiscence assumes every phase. The architecture of the poem is, like that of the 'Æneid,' strictly in accordance with the epic canons derived

from the structure of the 'Iliad' and the 'Odyssey.' The central figure Satan is in some important respects modelled on the 'Prometheus' of Æschylus. The battle scenes in the sixth book are parodies of the battle scenes in the 'Iliad.' Many touches in the description of the leaders of the Fallen Angels are borrowed from Homer's pictures of the Greek Chiefs. But the genius of Milton has more affinity with that of Virgil than with that of Homer—his versification in its staid and massive majesty; his diction in its elaborate artificiality; his ostentatious display of learning are Virgilian, not Homeric. The notes of the Homeric epic are simplicity, naturalness, and, under due artistic restraint, abandon, and those notes Milton neither caught nor had any incitement to catch. Mighty as was his genius and his enthusiasm as a poet his sympathies, impulses and capacities as a scholar and gatherer of learning were as ardent and stupendous as have ever existed in man. 'Paradise Lost' then, much as it owes to Homer, is in many essential respects not Homeric. Its place is not with the Homeric epic, the true primitive original epic, but with the literary epic, with the epic of the Alexandrian School and with the 'Æneid.' What is true of 'Paradise Lost' is true also, though to a less extent, of 'Paradise Regained.' Here the reminiscences of Greek Literature, though numerous, are not so numerous in proportion as in 'Paradise Lost.' But need I say that it contains in the fourth book (ll. 236-284) the noblest tribute to be found in our own or in

any other language to the genius of Greece ? I wish we could forget that it is placed in the mouth of Satan for the purpose of eliciting from the lips of Christ the speech which follows.

Passing by the 'Davideis' of Cowley, which is modelled on Virgil, and owes nothing directly to Greek, and Davenant's 'Gondibert,' which was written with the intention of emancipating the epic from the canons of classicism, we come to that interesting epic of Richard Glover's, 'Leonidas,' published in 1737. Warton, a very competent judge, tells us that Glover was one of the best and most accurate Greek scholars of his time. 'Leonidas' was once, for a short time, the most popular poem in English literature, but that was for political reasons, because Glover was the poet laureate of the Patriots, as they were called, that is to say, of the Opposition at the time of Walpole's ministry. But his 'Leonidas' is now forgotten, and the world is always right in these matters, seldom losing its memory without good reason. The truth is that Glover was one of those poets who just stop short of genius. But in style and tone 'Leonidas' is thoroughly Greek. The poem is modelled on Homer and occasionally, though not often, catches the Homeric note; the style severely simple, terse, chaste, lucid and precise, is Greek in the true sense of the term. But these qualities are carried too far; its simplicity degenerates too often into baldness; its terseness into abrupt, jerky brevity, and its lucidity and precision are

acquired at the expense of charm, of flexibility, variety, grandeur. In choosing a Spartan subject it would seem that Glover affected a Spartan style. It is just such a poem as a Spartan Homer, without genius, might have written. It is like Homer's style in shorthand. What life the poem has is in its vindication of liberty, and we may note in passing that it was as the eulogists, vindicators and prophets of liberty that the Greek poets and orators especially attracted Akenside, Collins, and even Gray, the poets, so to speak, of the Second Greek Renaissance. Glover left another epic, the 'Athenaid,' in thirty books, which was a continuation of 'Leonidas.' But it is much inferior, less Greek in style, and probably represents only the first draft of a poem which his severe taste would have greatly curtailed had he lived to revise it.

Southey's 'Epics,' 'Roderick' and 'Madoc,' come next. They owe nothing to Greek and little, if anything, to classical influence. A man who preferred Lucan and Statius to Virgil in Latin literature is not likely to have resorted to Greek models, or in any case to have profited much from them. But in Landor's 'Gebir' we are again with the Greeks and the Homeric poems. Landor's robust and original genius always revolted from servile imitation, but its chief impulse and nutriment came from the Greeks. He is one of the most Greek of English poets. If not in architecture, at any rate in tone, colour and style, 'Gebir' is thoroughly Homeric, however much Landor's

own genius has modified, and modified it has importantly, Homeric qualities. And what is true of 'Gebir' is true in a still greater degree, we may note in passing, of Landor's 'Hellenics.' But for the Greeks, we should not have had the best poetry of Landor; and most of his best poetry is found in these 'Hellenics.'

Next, chronologically, to 'Gebir' comes the magnificent epic fragment of Keats, the *Hyperion*. Nothing could be more Greek in some important respects than this poem, but it is Hellenism tempered slightly with the Elizabethan note and more potently with the Miltonic note. It is remarkable that Keats could not read Greek poetry in the original; he was too lazy and dissolute to undertake the drudgery necessary for the task; but, as in the case of Marlowe, natural affinity, instinctive sympathy, enabled him to get at Greek genius and art through translations, so that sometimes in his poetry we find the pure Greek spirit as in his 'Ode on a Grecian Urn':—

"Who are these coming to the sacrifice?  
To what green altar, O mysterious priest,  
Leadst thou that heifer lowing at the skies  
And all her silken flanks with garlands drest?  
What little town by river or sea-shore,  
Or mountain-built with peaceful citadel,  
Is emptied of its folk this pious morn?"

Landor and Keats lead us, as transition links, to the poets with whom we conclude this brief review of the influence of Greek on our epic poets—Tennyson and Matthew Arnold.

The 'Idylls of the King' was a new experiment in epic poetry, which may be called the Idyllic Epic—

a continuous epic story, presented in a series of idylls—pictures, frescoes as it were. Now it is not unlikely that Theocritus designed an epic on a similar plan. Among his idylls are two, the ‘ Infant Hercules ’ and ‘ Hercules the Lion-slayer,’ both apparently fragments. It might have been that he designed an epic on the career of Hercules, intending to present it in a series of idylls, not in continuous epic narrative. Such an idea would be exactly in accordance with the spirit and taste of the Alexandrian age, an age like our own, when short works, especially in poetry, were more to people’s liking than long ones. Τὸ μέγα βιβλίον ἴσον μεγάλῳ κακῷ (the great book is tantamount to a great evil), said the typical man of that age, Callimachus. And there are, moreover, other indications in Alexandrian Literature of epics being designed on that popular plan. No doubt they talked—those degenerate, hurriedly living Alexandrians—of ‘ wading ’ through the ‘ Iliad ’ and ‘ Odyssey ’ much as we talk of wading through ‘ Paradise Lost.’ It is probable, then, that the idyllic epic, which we have seen realized by Tennyson, was originated by the Alexandrian poets, and it was from them that Tennyson got the idea.

The Homeric influence on the ‘ Idylls of the King ’ is immense, and it is quite impossible here to touch on it in detail. Similes, phrases, epithets, idioms are transferred from ‘ Iliad ’ and ‘ Odyssey ’ alike. For illustrations I may be allowed perhaps to refer to my ‘ Illustrations of Tennyson.’ Tennyson, being

mainly in essence a reflective and artificial poet, resembles Virgil much more than he resembles Homer. But it may safely be said that there is more of the race and flavour of Homer's style in these idylls than there is in the 'Æneid.' Virgil never got as near Homer as Tennyson does in a passage like this :—

"They couch'd their spears and prick'd their steeds and thus  
 Their plumes, driv'n backward by the wind they made  
 In moving, all together down upon him  
 Bare, as a wild wave in the wide North Sea  
 Green glimmering toward the summit bears, with all  
 Its stormy crests that smoke against the skies,  
 Down on a bark and overbears the bark  
 And him that helms it, so they overbore  
 Sir Lancelot and his charger."

And so, in the 'Morte d'Arthur,' which the poet himself described as a faint Homeric echo, the opening lines are truly Homeric :—

"So all day long the noise of battle roll'd  
 Among the mountains by the wintry shore."

But Homer would never have described a moustache as "the knightly growth that fring'd his lips," and the poem, as a whole, is far more Virgilian than Homeric.

And lastly we come to the most comprehensively faithful Homeric echo in our language, Matthew Arnold's episode of 'Sohrab and Rustum.' This is pure Homer, the exact counterpart of the ordinary level and cast of the Homeric style and temper, not rising as Tennyson rises in the passages just quoted to the very grandest of his notes, but faithfully catching and preserving all but those. Matthew Arnold most accurately defined and indicated Homer's

characteristics, when he said they were majesty, simplicity, rapidity and radiance. Read 'Sohrab and Rustum,' and you will understand in English illustration what he meant. There is also much of the Homeric spirit in his 'Balder Dead,' but this is not equal to 'Sohrab and Rustum.' Matthew Arnold's poetry, as a whole, is the nearest approach our English language and poetry has ever made in point of style to the style of Greek poetry. Here we must conclude this very brief sketch of the influence of Greek on our epic poetry, and turn to the consideration of the Drama.

In speaking of tragedy we must discriminate. Of the Elizabethan classical drama—of such plays as Sackville and Norton's 'Gorboduc,' Gascoigne's 'Jocasta,' Hughes' 'Misfortunes of Arthur,' Daniel's 'Philotas' and Ben Jonson's 'Catiline' and 'Sejanus' and the like—I shall not speak, because they were modelled not on the Greek tragedies but on Roman and Italian imitations of these tragedies, especially on the Senecan drama. Nor at present shall I say anything about Shakespeare's histories and tragedies, because it is not certain that he was acquainted with the Greek tragedies or in any way directly influenced by them. But let us say this at once, that Shakespeare's conception of the architecture, mechanism, principles and scope of tragedy were in essential points identical with those of the Greeks; let us say that, as an artist and critic of life, he is as nearly the counterpart of Sophocles as one poet, making allowance for changed

historical conditions, can possibly be of another ; let us say that the coincidences, and coincidences of all kinds and on all sides, to be found in his plays with the Greek plays, are so extraordinary that it is difficult to believe that they are accidental. Greek influence on the Elizabethan drama may have been greater than appears. Dekker and Chettle either translated or imitated the 'Agamemnon' and the 'Eumenides' of Æschylus, and Peele translated one of the 'Iphigenias' of Euripides, although we do not know which it was. Chapman knew Greek and other Elizabethans could read Greek plays in Latin translations. But I will for the present pass this by, and confine myself to direct imitations of the Greek tragedies and to works which may be described as springing directly, though in modified forms, from those plays. Milton's 'Samson Agonistes' is in its form absolutely Greek, although in tone it is Hebraic, and although its autobiographic character is alien to the Greek drama. Of Thomson's tragedies, 'Edward and Eleonora' is little more than an adaptation of the 'Alcestis' of Euripides, and his 'Agamemnon' borrows several passages from Æschylus.

Between 1751 and 1759 William Mason made a second attempt to naturalize Greek tragedy in English in his two dramas, 'Elfrida' and 'Caractacus.' The latter was translated into Greek by G. H. Glasse. Then came Richard Glover with his 'Medea' in 1761. Here we have a slight variety

from the Greek model in its being divided into acts and scenes, but with this exception it is purely Greek. The lyrics of the chorus, in one or two of which he anticipates Matthew Arnold, are unrhymed and are strictly arranged in strophe and antistrophe. Just noticing William Sotheby's 'Orestes' in 1802, we come to Matthew Arnold's 'Merope' (1858), which is an exact counterpart of the Greek drama, not only in form, but also in its ethical characteristics. Last of all, we have Swinburne's brilliant dramas, 'Atalanta in Calydon,' and 'Erechtheus.' Such have been the attempts to naturalize the Greek drama in its rigid form in our literature.

Of modified forms of the Greek drama in English one of the most important is Milton's 'Comus.' Shelley's 'Prometheus Unbound' is a magnificent variant on the 'Prometheus Bound' of Æschylus, but its florid beauty and philanthropic enthusiasm are far from being Greek. Mrs. Browning's 'Drama of Exile' is another modification of the Greek dramatic form. Nor must we forget Robert Browning's fine setting of the 'Alcestis' in 'Balaustion's Adventure,' and of the *Hercules Furens* in his 'Aristophanes' Apology.'

Satan's address to the sun in the beginning of the fourth book of 'Paradise Lost' was originally intended to be the prologue to a drama in the Greek style. Like other soliloquies in 'Paradise Lost' and 'Paradise Regained,'<sup>1</sup> it is an imitation of the soliloquies found

<sup>1</sup> See P. L. iv, 358, 505. P. R. i, 196.

in the Greek dramas. On those soliloquies have also been modelled such noble poems as Browning's 'Artemis Prologizes' and Tennyson's 'Ulysses,' 'Tithonus,' 'Teiresias,' 'Demeter and Persephone,' which are tempered sometimes with a Homeric sometimes with a Theocritean note. It should be added, too, that the Greek choruses have been the models on which some of our finest poetry has been constructed. From them sprang such lyrics as Collins' 'Ode to Fear' and Shelley's 'Worlds on Worlds' in 'Hellas.'

The old Greek comedy, as represented by Aristophanes, has for the most part influenced English Literature only indirectly. Ben Jonson imitated the Parabases of Aristophanes. Foote, owing to the violent personality of the satire in his dramas, was called, not without reason, the English Aristophanes. Richard Cumberland, another playwright who had studied Greek at the University, translated the 'Clouds' into English, and no doubt in his own dramas owed something to his knowledge of the old Attic comedy. Four unsuccessful attempts which are not worth mentioning have been made in recent years to present counterparts to Aristophanic comedy in English. The influence of the New Comedy through Plautus and Terence has, of course, been immense, but we are not concerned at present with what has come to us indirectly through Rome.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> On the influence of Plautus in modern literature see Reinhardstöttner, *Spätere Bearbeitungen plautinscher Lustspiele* (1886).

Bucolic poetry and idyllic poetry, the creations of the Alexandrian school, are represented to us by the idylls of Theocritus, Bion and Moschus, which have influenced English poetry so immensely that I have only space to indicate that influence by one illustration, the Funeral Poem. From the dirge over Daphnis in the first idyll of Theocritus, from Bion's dirge over Adonis and from Moschus' funeral poem on Bion have flowed (other rills, of course, contributing, and various modifications taking place), Spenser's 'Astrophel' and 'Mourning Muse of Thestylis,' Drummond's 'Pastoral Elegy,' Milton's 'Lycidas,' Congreve's 'Mourning Muse of Alexis,' Mason's 'Musæus,' Shelley's 'Adonais,' Matthew Arnold's 'Thyrsis' and innumerable other elegies: I have only selected one, as you will see, from each era.

Again, Theocritus suggested the form and gave the keynote for the style of 'Ænone,' for such idylls as the 'Gardener's Daughter,' and 'Walking to the Mail,' and for the superb lyric in the 'Princess,' "Come down, O maid." Turn where we will in Tennyson's poetry, we are never long without perceiving the perfume of this sweetest of Greek poets. And here we may notice that it is not so much in what is formal and susceptible of exact estimation that the influence of poetry on poetry is most real. The indebtedness of our poets to Greece, where that indebtedness is greatest, is often such as evades illustrative definition.

And now let us turn to another branch of poetry, and notice the influence which the Greek hymns have

had on our poetry. These are represented by the Homeric hymns, the hymns of Callimachus and the Orphic hymns. Our poetical literature is full of poems, or of passages in poems, which have been modelled on them, which are sometimes simply parodies of them. We have first of all Spenser's four hymns, to Love, to Beauty, to Heavenly Love, to Heavenly Beauty. To these we shall have again, in the last lecture, to recur, because they are steeped in Platonism. These do not, of course, borrow their form from the Greek hymns, but they derived their origin from them and much of their inspiration, and are constructed on their model. Chapman, who translated the Homeric hymns, modelled on them his 'Hymn to Christ upon the Cross.' If the Psalms gave the main inspiration, the hymns in 'Paradise Lost' owed much in the formal moulding to the Homeric hymns and to those of Callimachus. Henry More's philosophical poems are penetrated with the influence of the Orphic hymns. Two of the hymns of Callimachus have been paraphrased by Prior. Akenside, who, by the way, was saturated with Greek, has given us in his 'Hymn to the Naiads' the exact counterpart in English of the Callimachan hymn, and in several of his inscriptions we have the pure Greek note.

In William Whitehead's 'Hymn to the Nymph of the Bristol Spring' we have another imitation of Callimachus. Warton's 'Pleasures of Melancholy,' which would have been more correctly entitled 'A

Hymn to Melancholy,' is but an ornate and picturesque variation of the Callimachan hymn. What are Keats' 'Hymn to Neptune,' Shelley's 'Hymn of Apollo,' Coleridge's 'Hymn to the Earth,' Wordsworth's 'Hymn to the Moon,' and innumerable others, but glorious echoes of the old Greek strains?

Now passing over the influence of the Greek minor poetry—the elegiac poetry and the epigram, which from the Elizabethan Age downwards has penetrated our poetry, giving us directly or indirectly many precious gems—we come to the great Greek Lyric Poets. To Anacreon, or rather to the Pseudo-Anacreon, we owe the charming Anacreontic, which, since Cowley naturalized it, has gone on repeating itself in every generation of our poets. To Sappho we owe innumerable poems or passages of poems of which Tennyson's 'Eleanore' and Swinburne's 'Anactoria' may be taken as illustrations. On Dionysius' 'Ode to Nemesis' Gray modelled his noble 'Ode to Adversity,' which became in its turn the model for Wordsworth's as noble 'Ode to Duty.' And who that is familiar with the fragments of other Greek lyric poetry, with those of Alcæus and Simonides especially, does not find their perfume and their echo in the lyrics of Akenside, Collins, Gray, Shelley, Landor, Tennyson, Arnold and Swinburne?

But our grandest inheritance from the Lyric of Greece is the Pindaric Ode—the ode modelled on the Epinikian Odes of Pindar. To deal adequately with the influence of Pindar on English poetry would

require a volume. Let me only touch on the subject generally. And let us take first the direct imitations of Pindar ; then the various modifications ; and we shall find famous masterpieces of English lyric poetry.

The odes of Pindar are constructed on a very rigidly metrical system, among both the former and the latter, and in the full scheme consist of strophe, antistrophe and epode. The first poet who attempted to naturalize the Pindaric ode in English was Ben Jonson in his Pindaric ode on the death of Sir Henry Morison, and this regards faithfully the metrical scheme of strophe, antistrophe and epode. Next came Cowley in his ' Pindarique Odes,' as he calls them, two of which are adaptations of Pindar, one of Horace, one a paraphrase of part of Isaiah, and the others are original. But Cowley does not regard the strophe, antistrophe and epode, though there is a certain regularity about his metre. The consequence of this was that he called into being the pseudo-Pindaric or irregular ode, which, from his time to the death of Dryden, became one of the most popular forms of lyric poetry, and the works of the minor poets of that time abound in these so-called Pindaric odes, wild and licentious compositions in verses of every variety of syllables and feet, from verses of two feet to verses of sixteen. Some memorable odes were written in this pseudo-Pindaric style, such as Dryden's ' Song for St. Cecilia's Day,' his ' Ode to the Memory of Mrs. Anne Killigrew,' and his ' Alexander's Feast.' Dryden's contemporary, John Oldham, produced

one of the most remarkable of the pseudo-Pindaric odes in his dithyramb in praise of Bacchus. Cowley's tradition was also kept up by the Pindarics of Dr. Thomas Sprat and by Thomas Yalden in his 'Hymn to Darkness.' Then came Congreve, who, after writing some of these irregular pseudo-Pindaric odes, acknowledged his error and wrote two in which he restored the strophe, antistrophe and epode, prefixing to them an interesting preface, in which he explained the metrical regularity of Pindar. Nevertheless, Swift, Pope, Addison, Prior and innumerable others went on producing their irregular Pindarics. But one poet of that age, Elijah Fenton, wrote in the regular style and produced a really fine Pindaric ode, dashed with Horatian influence—his 'Ode to Lord Gower,' which contains such powerful lines as these:—

“ Shall man from Nature's sanction stray,  
With blind opinion for his guide,  
And rebel to her rightful sway,  
Leave all her bounties unenjoy'd ?  
Fool ! Time no change of motion knows  
With equal speed the torrent flows,  
To sweep Fame, Power, and Wealth away :  
The past is all by Death possess'd,  
And frugal Fate that guards the rest,  
By giving, bids him live to-day.”

Passing by Akenside, whose Pindarics are more than respectable, we come to two immortal lyric poets, Collins and Gray. Collins' odes to Fear, to Mercy and to Liberty are three of the finest lyrics in our language, and are modelled partly on Pindar and partly on the Greek choruses. The ode to the Passions is not in strophe, antistrophe and epode,

but an irregular and noble variation of the Pindaric ode. Then come Gray's 'Bard' and 'Progress of Poesy' which, though strongly flavoured with Latin rhetoric, are attempts to produce in English exact counterparts of Pindar, and so also is his fine Installation Ode. Then, passing over minor illustrations, we come to Shelley's grand Pindaric 'Ode to Naples.' And how splendid have been the modern variants of the Pindaric, Coleridge's Odes on France and the Departing Year, Shelley's 'Ode to Liberty,' Wordsworth's 'Intimations of Immortality' and 'Vernal Ode,' Tennyson's 'Ode to Memory' and 'On the Death of the Duke of Wellington'! So remarkable has been the history of Pindar's direct and indirect influence on our lyric poetry.

On Greek lyric poetry, simple or choric, have been modelled such gems as Ben Jonson's 'Queen and Huntress Chaste and Fair,' as the second and third song in Milton's 'Arcades,' as the Echo Song and the Sabrina Song in 'Comus.' Of Matthew Arnold's most delicious lyrics some are purely Greek, faithful Greek echoes, and, even where the modern note predominates, the Greek note is always there. But turn where we will in English lyric and elegiac poetry, we shall never wander very far without catching the breath and savour of the lyric genius of Greece. Nor must we omit to notice the enormous influence, both direct and indirect, which the Greek anthology has exercised on our minor poetry. From the time of the Renaissance

there were innumerable selections from this collection generally accompanied with a Latin version, and it would literally fill a substantial volume adequately to indicate the influence of these poems on our minor poetry from, say, Shakespeare's last sonnet, which is a version of one of these poems, Ben Jonson's imitations, and onward through the Elizabethan Age in unbroken tradition to the poetry of to-day. The form of these poems has seldom or never been borrowed, but the matter, the sentiment, the imagery, the ideas have been a common treasury.

I have exceeded the time allotted to me, and yet I have not touched on what is perhaps the most important part of this subject, I mean the influence which Greek poetry has, as it were, insensibly exercised, exercised not formally on expression but as an inspiring, tempering, modifying, educative power, by which our poetry has been imperceptibly affected much as our minds are unconsciously affected by the air and character of those with whom we associate. And this constitutes perhaps our most real and important debt to Greece. But I have said enough to indicate, though I have only grazed the surface of the subject, how vast and complex is the indebtedness of English poetry to the poetry of Greece.

## LECTURE IV

## INFLUENCE OF GREEK CRITICISM

LITERARY Criticism, that is Criticism in relation to literature, may, for purposes of convenience, be classed under three headings: (1) Grammatical and Syntactical Criticism, (2) Æsthetic Criticism, and (3) Philosophical Criticism. By grammatical criticism we mean that which concerns itself with verbal expression, with words singly or with words in combination, with the pure mechanism of expression but only of expression in detail, with diction, and, strictly speaking, with diction as distinguished from style, for style includes more than diction, and Longinus distinguished them, calling the one *λέξις* and the other *σύνθεσις*. Syntactical criticism concerns itself with the general structure or architecture of a composition. By æsthetic criticism we mean the application of the laws of taste in the fullest signification of the term. But what do we mean by Taste? Let Hallam define it for us. "Taste is the presiding faculty which regulates in all works within her jurisdiction the struggling powers of imagination, emotion and reason. Taste must also determine, by an intuitive sense of right, somewhat analogous to that which regulates the manners of polished life, to what extent the most simple, the

most obvious, the most natural is to be modified by a studious introduction of the new, the striking and the beautiful, so that neither what is insipid and trivial nor yet what is forced and affected may displease us."

In other words æsthetic criticism is, on the one hand, an analysis of the laws of the beautiful (τὸ καλόν) and the becoming (τὸ πρέπον) and, on the other, the application of those laws to what finds expression in belles-lettres.

By philosophic criticism, which I have ventured for the purpose of fuller definition to distinguish from æsthetic criticism, I mean that which concerns itself with the metaphysics, the ethics, the politics and the matter generally of the particular work under review.

To show clearly what is meant by these various kinds of criticism let me give an example of each.

Grammatical criticism finding in 'Macbeth' the lines

"Till that Bellona's Bridegroom, lapp'd in proof,  
Confronted him with self-comparison,"

will tell you why they are faulty.

Syntactic criticism examines the structure of Shakespeare's 'Henry VIII' and will tell you why it is disgraceful to a dramatic artist.

Æsthetic criticism will discern and explain how or why rhythm so diverse and various as that of 'Othello' and the 'Rape of the Lock,' as that of the 'Faerie Queene' and 'Christabel,' is yet the perfection of harmony; how and why the blinding of Gloucester

and the carnage which closes 'Hamlet' are no violations of the becoming in art; and how and why artists so superficially and seemingly different as Sophocles and Shakespeare are, as artists, equally consummate.

Philosophical criticism will reveal what Aristophanes meant when he said that boys indeed have the schoolmaster to teach them, but when they become men the poets are their teachers,<sup>1</sup> and will show us also that the difference between poetry of the first order and poetry of the second is not a difference in degree but almost a difference in kind or in relation to the ends at which it aims. In other words it deals with the metaphysics, ethics, politics of poetry. Now I need hardly say that though these three branches of criticism may be thus distinguished and that though each has its particular function and aim, yet they often overlap and blend, and this is more particularly the case with the first two, which taken together are ordinarily held to constitute Criticism. But if they blended, the Greeks also clearly distinguished them, and they have in various works, or portions of works, elaborately dealt with each of these branches. What I have called grammatical and syntactic criticism, all that is to say that appertains to diction and structure, they have treated exhaustively, chiefly in works of rhetoric in relation to oratory. Such would be, in chronological order, the third book of Aristotle's

<sup>1</sup> *Ranae*, 1055-1056.

'Rhetoric,' the treatise *περὶ συνθέσεως ὀνομάτων* (on verbal composition) by Dionysius of Halicarnassus; the treatise *περὶ ἑρμηνείας* (on expression), a most excellent manual attributed to Demetrius Phalereus, but really written by another Demetrius, a grammarian who flourished about A.D. 170; the treatises of Hermogenes, who lived in the reign of the Antonines; the treatises of Apsines of Gadara, who flourished about 235 A.D.; and the 'Introduction to the Study of Rhetoric' by Aphthonius of Antioch, who lived about 316 A.D. In the 'Poetics' of Aristotle grammatical and syntactic criticism is applied to poetry; in the 'Treatise on the Sublime,' attributed to Longinus, it is applied both to poetic and prose expression generally; but in these most precious works this branch of criticism is blended with the other two. In the treatise of Dionysius of Halicarnassus, in which he criticizes Lysias, Isocrates and Isaeus, all are blended, and also in his 'Art of Rhetoric,' in which he so admirably criticizes Homer. In the *Ion* of Plato, if it be his (and surely it must be, for who else could have written it?) we have an exquisite illustration of purely æsthetic and philosophical criticism as applied to poetry, and scattered here and there throughout Plato's dialogues are the germs of a perfect philosophy of art, though he never developed them systematically. And, if in the third book of the 'Rhetoric,' Aristotle has given us a masterly analysis, the model and archetype of all subsequent analysis

of the mechanism of oratorical expression, in the first and second books he has set forth, and set forth for all time, the whole philosophy of rhetoric, determined and defined its scope and prescribed its canons. And such writers as Campbell, the author of the admirable 'Philosophy of Rhetoric,' and Archbishop Whately in his work on rhetoric, do but re-state and comment on what Aristotle has laid down. In the treatise of Plutarch on 'Hearing the Poets' we have another, if a very inferior illustration, of the same kind of criticism.

These works, it must be remembered, represent only a fraction of what the Greeks produced in criticism, nay two of the most precious of these works are themselves only fragments. Aristotle's 'Poetics' is a mere segment, and a segment corrupted in various ways, of the original work. The 'Treatise on the Sublime' has plainly suffered in the same way through corruption and interpolation, and is also a fragment.

But enough remains of Greek criticism to show that the Greeks were not only the fathers of criticism in all its branches, but have laid down for future ages the principles of criticism regarded as a science and regarded as an art. For let us remember this, that, as essence is the same, myriad as are its manifestations in phenomena, so it is with the laws of the Beautiful and the Excellent. They are fixed, permanent and unchanging, the same yesterday, to-day and for ever. Language is but the medium on

symbol of expression ; one language differs from another in power and adequacy, and that is all. What constitutes excellence in style and diction, and what constitutes by implication the opposite, is the same in all languages. Precisely the same criteria are applicable to the style of Homer and Milton, of Virgil and Dante, of Calderon and Molière. What constitutes excellence and beauty in the architectural structure of literary work is, however, infinitely modified and complicated, the same wherever architectural structure is found. Differences in degree and in formal expression do not constitute differences in kind and in essence. No compositions could be more apparently unlike each other than Shakespeare's ' King Lear ' and Sophocles' *Philoctetes*, than the 'Odyssey' and Pope's ' Rape of the Lock,' than Sappho's ' Ode to the Loved One ' and Burns' lyric ' To Mary in Heaven,' but the laws of the beautiful and the excellent in relation to *architectonique* are the same in all. The analysis and definition of these laws—the analysis and definition of the principles of the beautiful, the true and the good in their various manifestation, the revelation of their identity, and the interpretation therefore of the relation between æsthetics and morals—this is what we owe to the Greeks.

And therefore it has been that, as soon as ever criticism which had any pretension to be regarded as scientific made its appearance in modern Europe, it went to the Greeks, or to those Romans who

reflected the influence of Greece, for its canons. The more it advanced the greater became its debt to Greece, and it advanced in proportion to the industry and intelligence with which Greek criticism was studied and interpreted. The critics of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and those of the first half of the eighteenth, great as was their indebtedness to Aristotle and Longinus, were too much in sympathy with Roman art, concerned themselves too much with what may be called the superficialities of criticism and were for various reasons indisposed or unable to explore the principles of æsthetics and the deeper philosophy of art. They were for the most part the slaves of rhetoric. But with the appearance of Winckelman and Lessing in the latter half of the eighteenth century a new era in criticism commenced, the era of æsthetic and philosophical criticism, and then it was that the true influence of Hellenic critical art became energetic and influential. Up to that time Aristotle and Longinus had been studied, the one chiefly, or perhaps mainly, in relation to the structure of the drama, and the other in relation to the principles of diction and style of composition. The era initiated by Winckelman and Lessing produced in succession, as the decades went on, the greatest names in modern criticism : Goethe, Schiller, the Schlegels, Coleridge, Sainte-Beuve, Matthew Arnold.

The critical education of all these men was Hellenic. They have all of them proclaimed that the

foundation of a finished critical education must rest on an Hellenic foundation. All their canons and criteria were derived or deduced from Greek art and from what was of course in its turn a deduction from Greek art, Greek criticism. When Lessing wrote, "I consider Aristotle's 'Poetics' as infallible as the elements of Euclid. Its foundations are as clear and definite, though certainly not as comprehensible and therefore more exposed to misconstruction. And with regard to tragedy, I would venture to prove incontestably that it cannot depart a step from the plumb-line of Aristotle without departing so far from its own perfection": when Schiller wrote, "We are justified in claiming the reputation of culture and refinement, when contrasted with a purely natural state of society, but not so when comparing ourselves with the Greek nature. . . . They put us to shame. They are our rivals, nay frequently our models, in those very points of superiority from which we seek comfort when regretting the unnatural character of our manners"<sup>1</sup>: when Schlegel wrote, "Greek art executed what it proposed in the utmost perfection, but the modern can only by approximation do justice to its endeavours after what is infinite"<sup>2</sup>: when Coleridge said, "The function of ancient Greece was the realization and proclamation of the ideal"—they indicated the nature and extent of the influence of Greek on modern criticism, taken in its widest signification.

<sup>1</sup> 'Æsthetical Letter,' VI.

<sup>2</sup> 'Dramatic Literature.' Lecture I.

I need hardly say that we are not to understand from all this that criticism must not recognize that art is progressive, that we are to set up the achievements of the Greeks as standards and models, and to suppose that any deviation from those standards and models is necessarily vicious and for the worse. Schlegel himself has shown, like Browning, that the greatness of modern art lies in its imperfection, and that Greek art, if perfect, is limited. The Greeks idealized the finite, whereas modern art aspires towards the infinite, and is the expression, troubled often and tumultuous, of thoughts beyond the reaches of our frame, the expression of desire rather than of attainment. But, for all that, the ultimate law of art is beauty, harmony, and we do well to keep that ideal before us, and that ideal we have always before us in the theories and achievements of the artists of Greece.

Let me now pass from this preliminary matter, from this definition of criticism, and these general remarks on the importance of Greek criticism and the nature of the influence it has had on modern criticism, and proceed to the particular subject of this lecture. Let us begin with a brief historical sketch of the influence Greek criticism has exercised on English criticism. It has affected us in four ways: firstly, through the Romans, that is to say, through the rhetorical writings of Cicero, through Horace's *Ars Poetica* and those of his satires and epistles, which deal with literary criticism, through

the Dialogue *De Oratoribus* attributed to Tacitus, and through the great work of Quintilian ; secondly, through the French critics of the seventeenth century, notably Corneille, Renè Rapin, Renè le Bossu, Charles Perrault, Fontenelle ; thirdly, through Italian and French translations of Aristotle's ' Rhetoric ' and ' Poetics,' and of Longinus' ' Treatise on the Sublime,' and two of these were so important from their popularity that they should be specified, namely, Boileau's translation of Longinus, published in 1674, and Dacier's translation of Aristotle's ' Poetics,' 1692 ; and, lastly, through either the Greek texts themselves or through the Latin version printed with the Greek. It may be doubted whether, with the exception of Ben Jonson, any distinguished man of letters in England read these works in the Greek till late in the eighteenth century.

Although Sir Thomas Elyot in his ' Governour ' (1531) shows a surprising knowledge of what may be called miscellaneous Greek criticism, the earliest formal critical treatise in English that we have to notice is Thomas Wilson's ' Arte of Rhetorique ' (1553). The author of this work had seen the ' Rhetoric ' of Aristotle, but he does not go very deep into the subject. It was succeeded two years afterwards, in 1555, by Richard Sherry's ' Treatise of the Figures of Grammar and Rhetoric.' This is also very slight and thin, and the Aristotelean knowledge shown in it is next to nothing.

English criticism from the middle to the end of the century is represented chiefly by William Webbe's

'Discourses of English Poesie' (1586), Puttenham's 'Art of English Poesie' (1589), Sidney's 'Defense of Poesie,' Meres' *Palladis Tamia* (1598), and one or two tracts of Gascoigne, Daniel and Campion; but with one exception none of these works owe much, some of them nothing, either directly or indirectly, to Greek criticism.

The exception is a remarkable one. Sidney's 'Apologie for Poetrie,' composed about 1583, but not published until 1595, shows that its author had carefully studied the 'Poetics,' chiefly in Latin. Following Aristotle, he points out that the poet either makes things better than Nature brings forth, or produces quite new forms. He defines poetry as an art of imitation, and he comments on this definition. He lays stress upon the distinction made by Aristotle between historians and poets. "The historian," he says, "wanting the precept is so tied not to what should be but to what is, to the particular truth of things and not to the general reason of things that his example draweth no necessary consequence," and so poetry is "more philosophical and more studiously serious than history" (*φιλοσοφώτερον καὶ σπουδαιότερον ποίησις ιστορίας*), and in quoting Aristotle's remark that Praxis and not Gnosis should be its effect he shows that he had got hold of the very kernel of Aristotle's notion of the function of poetry; for I must take leave to deny what is so often contended, that Aristotle's conception of poetry was purely æsthetic. Nothing could be more demonstrably erroneous.

Again, he comments admirably on Aristotle's contention that the law of imitation is beauty. So, too, he defends the classical in opposition to the romantic drama then coming in, and, as staunchly and emphatically as Lessing, upholds the Aristotelian canons.

The most considerable critic of the Elizabethan Age was Ben Jonson, and the best body of criticism to be found in that age is Ben Jonson's 'Discoveries.' Jonson was, it is true, more at home in the Latin critics, Cicero, Horace and Quintilian, and owes most to them; but he had studied the 'Poetics' as is apparent from several sections in the 'Discoveries,' and he has said very discriminatively of Aristotle, that he was "the first accurate critic and truest judge . . . and out of many men's perfection in a science he formed still one art. So he taught us two offices together, how we ought to judge rightly of others, and what we ought to imitate especially in ourselves." Jonson has adopted Aristotle's definition of poetry, his theory of the functions of poetry, of the scope of comedy and the limitations of ridicule, of the construction of the epic, of propriety in style. And he has taken as texts three pregnant aphorisms from Greek criticism. The first was from Stobæus, or rather from a Greek poet quoted by Stobæus: "Without art nature can never be perfect, and without nature art can claim no being," a precept which contains in embryo the chief point at issue in the contest between the romantic and classical schools at the

beginning of this century. The second was the equally pregnant remark of Strabo, on which Milton has also commented, that no man could be a good poet who was not first a good man. The third aphorism that he derived from Greek criticism was Plutarch's famous remark about poetry and painting, that poetry is a speaking picture and picture a mute poesy, which Lessing so emphatically denied, and on which he has so much to say. Ben Jonson's acquaintance with Greek criticism was probably very superficial, and it affected him principally through Latin media, but through these media or directly he derived from it three important things, the definition and true scope of poetry, the essential connexion between æsthetics and ethics, and the nature of the relation between poetry and painting. His precepts and canons with regard to form and style, though originally Greek, came to him from the Roman critics.

Milton's occasional observations scattered through his prose works, and, above all, the preface prefixed to 'Samson Agonistes,' brought prominently before the English public some of the great principles of Greek criticism, and in the latter piece some of the principal canons of Greek tragedy were, for the first time, lucidly explained in English. I refer especially to his explanation of the meaning of *κάθαρσις* by fear and pity as the chief aim of tragedy. Two works were written during Milton's lifetime by his nephew, Edward Phillips, which are the fruits of a close

study of Greek criticism. The one was the *Tractatus de Carmine Dramatico Poetarum*, in Latin, and the other was in English—a most disappointing book entitled the *Theatrum Poetarum*. The appearance of Hobbes' admirable epitome of Aristotle's 'Rhetoric,' which was published originally some time before 1681, and was reprinted in that year, undoubtedly gave an impulse to this side of critical study. But towards the end of the century Aristotle and Longinus came suddenly into extraordinary prominence. This was due principally to the French critics and to the famous controversy between the advocates of the ancients and the advocates of the moderns. We have seen that in 1692 Dacier published his French translation of the 'Poetics,' while in 1674 Boileau had translated Longinus; these soon appeared in English. The literary world in France having been long convulsed with the feud as to the relative merits of the Greek and French poets, orators and critics, the controversy spread to England, and the hottest part of the fight soon began to rage round Shakespeare as the great representative of the modern drama. The ancients took their stand by the Attic dramatists, the moderns rallied round Shakespeare and the Elizabethans. "Aristotle to the rescue" now became the cry of the ancients in England, as it had been their cry in France.

Was the Greek conception of tragedy the right one or the Shakespearean? Opposing critics battled over the definition of tragedy by Aristotle as "the

representation of an action important, complete, and of a certain compass ; in language embellished with each kind of artistic ornament according to the several parts of the play ; in the form of action, not narration ; effecting through terror and pity the purging of such passions." They also discussed the structure of tragedy according to the Greek model, and assailed or supported the doctrine of the unities, that is to say, the unities of time and place, which had been first promulgated by the Italian critic Castelvetro in 1570. Corneille's three famous essays were published in 1659 : one on the dramatic poem ; one on tragedy in particular ; one on the three unities. Now these unities were and are popularly supposed to have been formulated by Aristotle ; but as a canon he has only one, the unity of action ; of the unity of place he says not a word, of the unity of time he makes no canon, but merely observes that the action of tragedy is generally comprised in a revolution of the sun. The canons of Greek tragedy, including these supposed Aristotelean canons, were applied to Shakespearean tragedies, and his gross violations of them, as well as his alleged want of artistic symmetry of plot, his improprieties of style, and his mixture of burlesque and tragedy were held up to ridicule, in such works as Rymer's ' *Tragedies of the Last Age Considered and Examined by the Practice of the Ancients and the Common Sense of all Ages* ' ; not to mention other works of the same kind.

The effect of this otherwise futile controversy was to bring Aristotle's great work into prominence, and to make it really influential in English criticism. And with Aristotle was revived also the noble work attributed to Longinus. From this time, indeed, English criticism is thoroughly pervaded with the influence of these works. The most influential, accomplished and voluminous critic of the seventeenth century was Dryden, who may almost be called the father of English criticism, certainly of that kind of criticism which culminated in Dr. Johnson. Now Dryden has himself said: "Aristotle with his interpreters and Horace and Longinus are the authors to whom I owe my lights." In his 'Essay of Dramatic Poesy,' in his 'Grounds of Criticism in Tragedy,' and in his 'Heads of an Answer to Rymer,' he draws largely on the 'Poetics' for his canons and criteria, and constantly also on Longinus. Though Aristotle is not much quoted in the 'Discourse of Epic Poetry,' it is clear that Dryden was familiar with that portion of the 'Poetics' which deals with the epic. It is, indeed, impossible to read many pages of Dryden's Critical Prefaces and Essays without meeting with illustrations, allusions and precepts derived from his two masters, as he has called Aristotle and Longinus. Dryden was very imperfectly acquainted with Greek, and he probably read rapidly, and generally used French translations and French commentators. Contemporary with Dryden was a man now known chiefly as the butt of

Pope, John Dennis. He deserves notice in this connexion, as the author of two pieces which plainly show the elevating influence which contact with Greek criticism soon began to exert, namely, his 'Advancement and Reformation of English Poetry,' written to show that the superiority of the ancient poetry over ours consisted in its association with the higher ethics and with religion, and as a plea for elevating English poetry into the same region, and the second work is his 'Grounds of Criticism in Poetry,' which is on the same lines and contains much sound critical instruction derived or deduced from Greek antiquity. Next comes Anthony Ashley Cooper, third Earl of Shaftesbury, the author of the 'Characteristics.' On no English author is the impression of Greek influence on the æsthetic side so deeply stamped. He had studied the Greek classics, particularly Plato and Aristotle, with enthusiasm and sympathy, and is in temper and taste one of the most Hellenic of Englishmen. His critical writings, that is, the second part of his 'Advice to an Author,' and the first, second and third chapters of his 'Miscellaneous Reflections,' are what concern us. Here we have the very genius of Greek criticism, its criteria, its standards, its principles, both in relation to the philosophy of art generally and in relation to the laws of formal expression. Justice has never been done to Shaftesbury in this connection.

Let us now pass to Addison. One of the most famous critiques in our eighteenth century literature

is his elaborate criticism of Milton's 'Paradise Lost.' In this Addison takes all his canons of criticism from the 'Poetics,' examining the whole structure of the poem with relation to them. His guide throughout is Aristotle. Indeed, his papers on Milton and other of his critical papers, too, are marked throughout by the results of a careful study of the 'Poetics' and of the 'Treatise on the Sublime.' Addison's knowledge of these works was probably derived not from the Greek, as he appears to have been a very poor Greek scholar, but from the French translations of Dacier and Boileau with the commentaries of the French critics. Pope's critical writings and notably the 'Essay on Criticism' do not evince any considerable direct knowledge of Greek criticism, for he seems to have drawn mostly on the Latin and French critics; but that criticism was, of course, itself derived from the Greek. However, his eloquent eulogy of Longinus, and it is as discriminating as it is eloquent, shows how much he appreciated him:—

"Thee, bold Longinus, all the Nine inspire  
And bless their critic with a poet's fire,  
An ardent judge who zealous in his trust  
With warmth gives sentence but is always just,  
Whose own example strengthens all his laws,  
And is himself that great Sublime he draws."

Longinus exercised immense influence on the critical writings of the eighteenth century, as might easily be shown in detail. No Greek prose classic, it may be added, has been so popular in England. Between 1652 and 1698 there were three separate

translations, between 1712 and 1770 there were three more, and during those years eleven editions. His popularity and influence are well indicated by Dean Swift in his 'Essay on Swift,' when he calls Longinus the great director of our taste and judgment. And Hurd places him as one of the three most popular critics, the other two being Bouhours and Addison. The only important critic of the eighteenth century who appears to have troubled himself very little about the criticism of the Greeks was Dr. Johnson. He may fairly be called the most anti-Hellenic of English critics. He was, of course, acquainted generally with the 'Poetics' and the 'Treatise on the Sublime,' but he was totally uninfluenced by both. In Hume's Literary Essays on Eloquence, on Tragedy, on Simplicity and Refinement in Writing, and on the Standard of Taste, we are again quite unmistakably on the track of the critical genius of Greece. It may have inspired him indirectly through the medium of the Latin and the influence of his predecessors in England and France, but it gave him his canons. And what applies to Hume applies, partially at all events, to that interesting and original critic, Lord Kames, whose 'Elements of Criticism,' published in 1762, was indeed written with the object of discarding mere authority, but is, for all that, considerably indebted to the Greek critics.

We now come to two writers who may be said to form the link between the criticism characteristic of the eighteenth century and the true philosophic

criticism which was characteristic of the era initiated in Germany by Lessing, between the criticism, let us say, speaking of England, characteristic of Addison and Johnson, and the criticism characteristic of Coleridge and the German school. We have seen that, with the exception of Shaftesbury, critics in England had, up to this time, principally confined themselves to criticism more or less occasional and superficial; had concerned themselves for the most part with forms rather than with principles; they had neither been profound nor subtle; their criticism was neither systematic nor scientific. But in Richard Hurd, afterwards Bishop of Worcester, and in James Harris, we have two scientific critics, men who really pierced to principles and essence. And they differed from their predecessors in being accurate and critical Greek scholars. They had studied the Greek masters with laborious and minute care, had studied them as Lessing did. Hurd's criticism is embodied in his notes on Horace's *Ars Poetica* and 'Epistle to Augustus,' in his three dissertations 'On the Idea of Universal Poetry,' 'On the Provinces of Dramatic Poetry' and 'On Poetical Imitation,' and these are among the most valuable contributions to literary criticism to be found in our language, incomparably the best literary criticism which had up to that time appeared in England. Aristotle's critical sentences may be compared to acorns, to the oak in embryo, and the same is frequently true of those of Longinus. Sympathy, kindred critical genius, intelligent patient

reflection, and ample learning—these enabled Hurd to unfold and expand the pregnant aphorisms of these great critics. Hurd was the parent and fore-runner of Twining, and Twining's 'Notes and Dissertations' appended to his translation of Aristotle's 'Poetics' are among the most precious contributions to criticism that were made in the eighteenth century.

Greek æsthetic criticism was brought home to literary England by two admirable treatises of James Harris, his 'Dialogue Concerning Art' and his 'Discourse on Music, Painting and Poetry' with the Notes, while in his 'Philological Enquiries' he made a valuable contribution to literary criticism by drawing on the treasures of the ancient Greek critics. Two admirable works, Campbell's 'Philosophy of Rhetoric' and more especially Archbishop Whately's 'Rhetoric,' may be called the connecting links between the academic study of Aristotle's great work and popular expositions of it.

Harris died in 1780 and Hurd in 1808, and two years after Hurd's death Coleridge, the coryphæus of English æsthetic philosophical criticism, was lecturing at the Royal Institution. Here my brief sketch of the outlines of this interesting subject of inquiry must close. Each generation has handed on the torch originally kindled in ancient Greece, and so will each generation continue to hand it on, and might we not say with Æschylus, remembering Coleridge's successors, our own contemporaries, "The first that started in the race is victor, having run last also."

## LECTURE V

## INFLUENCE OF GREEK PHILOSOPHY

IN directing your attention—for that is all that the time at my disposal allows—to the way in which English poetry has been affected by the influence of Greek metaphysics and ethics, it is not difficult to point out what particular aspects of these subjects have chiefly attracted our poets. But what is difficult is to bring the subject we are to consider within bounds, to present it simply, or, in other words, to distinguish between what is directly referable to Greek influence and what is to be attributed to other sources, and, lastly, to make what I have to explain intelligible. It is difficult to bring the subject within bounds, for in metaphysics and ethics, where poetry has dealt with them, the embryo always, the development often, is to be traced to the Greek philosophers; and to treat the subject exhaustively we should have to include commentaries on such works as Wordsworth's 'Excursion' and Pope's 'Essay on Man.' It is necessary to present the subject very simply, for, were we to take into account poems or portions of poems where Greek metaphysical and ethical thought have come in indirectly and undergone in various degrees modification, our task would be endless. Lastly, it is no easy matter to make the subject

under discussion intelligible, for I cannot assume that all of you are acquainted with the outlines, still less with the technicalities of the Platonic, Aristotelean and Stoic philosophy.

I think, therefore, it will be well for me so to deal with this subject as to find space, as I go along, for a brief general explanation of the philosophical theories to which reference will be made. And if I do this at the cost of contracting my illustration of the nature and extent of the influence exercised by Greek philosophy on our poetry, it will yet be well to do so, for it is better for a teacher to sacrifice fullness to clearness than to sacrifice clearness to fullness. What has chiefly attracted our poets in Greek philosophy is, as I said, easily indicated.

1st.—What we may call comprehensively Platonism, namely, the Platonic theory of ideas, or form and essence, and particularly the theory of *ἔρως*, the *νοητὸς τόπος* or world of the ideas discernible only by the pure intelligence, and the *ὁρατὸς τόπος*, or world of matter perceptible to the senses, the pre-existence and immortality of the soul and the doctrine of *ἀνάμνησις*, and the threefold principles of the *ψυχή*.

2nd.—The Aristotelean ethics, Aristotle's doctrine of the mean, his classification and analysis of the virtues, his definition of the *summum bonum* and the relation of the *πρακτικὸς βίος* (practical life) to the *θεωρητικὸς βίος* (contemplative life).

3rd.—The Stoic conception of life, of man in

relation to himself individually, to the world and to the divine, and of the divine in relation to man, the Stoic ideal, and especially τὸ ζῆν κατὰ φύσιν (life according to nature).

It is not often that we find English poets adopting any of these in their purity. Platonism is mixed up with Neo-Platonism sometimes in its most extravagant phases, and with Christian metaphysics, as in Henry More's *Psychozoia Platonica* and in Norris of Bemerton's poems; in Spenser and Milton it is tempered with Christian theology; in Wordsworth with Christianity and Spinozan Pantheism and with what looks like Hegelianism. Aristoteleanism has been modified in the same way in Spenser by combining it with Platonism and Christian ethics; in Shakespeare it seems to coincide with the results of independent original thought and observation, and thus, though it keeps its essence, it changes its front; in Pope it is a large element in an eclectic system. Stoicism has undergone the same modifications. Of all the ancient philosophers it has most affected our poetry chiefly, no doubt, owing to its having so much in common with Christian ethics. Its purest manifestation would seem to be in Milton, in whom, however Christianized, it keeps its form and flavour, and in Matthew Arnold, where we find it in its simplicity, quite untempered by Christianity.

Now, what do we mean by the Platonic theory of ideas?

Passing over all technicalities and without pausing

to explain the philosophical significance of the theory of ideas, how it was constructed as a compromise between the doctrine of the Eleatics that all is one and that there is no multiplicity, no becoming, and the Heracleitian doctrine of a perpetual flux modified by the dogma of Protagoras that the individual man is the standard of all things—passing over all this, let me state simply the general outline of this Platonic theory of ideas, asking you to bear in mind that much of it is symbolic and allegorical, presenting metaphysical truth through sensuous imagery in concrete fiction. Plato speaking in the person of Socrates fables that there are two worlds. One is the material world, the world of matter which is perceptible by the senses but which is purely phenomenal, having no real existence, perpetually decaying, perishing, changing, the mere wax on whose ever-melting matter form is eternally impressing itself to be eternally obliterated. The other is a world not perceptible by the senses, perceptible only by pure intelligence, *νόησις*—and this is the world of what really is—the world of the good, the world of the forms or archetypes of visible objects—the world of the ideas—the world of the only real entities. What exists in the world of matter, in the world perceptible by the senses, has only a sort of quasi existence, exists only in so far as it reflects or participates in these real essences, is a mere copy and not merely a perishable copy, but a wretchedly imperfect copy or image of the divine, eternal and perfect archetypes existing there in that

other world. Here on earth we have but phenomena, fleeting objects reflecting dimly and brokenly the divine archetypes, something, it may be, of beauty, justice, truth; but there in the world of ideas is beauty itself, justice itself, truth itself, "clear as the light, pure and undefiled, not daubed with human colouring nor polluted with human fleshiness and other kinds of mortal trash."

"The One remains—the many change and pass,  
Heaven's light for ever shines, earth's shadows fly."<sup>1</sup>

And as all here on earth, with all the infinite multiplicity in unity, are but drossy copies of the divine ideas, so the world itself is but the drossy embodiment of the idea of the good—of God.

Now, how comes it that we in this world have any perception of what the senses certainly could never have revealed to us? How comes it that we have the idea of the good—that when we see the good, the true, the beautiful, we recognize them, recognize them in the faint and dim copies which is all of their divine original we have here in this poor world, and not merely recognize them, but, in proportion as we can subdue our carnal mundane nature, are instinctively attracted by and to them? Why, because we have seen the originals, have been in communion with the good, the true, the beautiful; because our souls, before they became imprisoned in this prison-house of flesh, before "in that uphill path to the highest arch of heaven" the vicious steed of the soul's chariot<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Adonais*, LII.

<sup>2</sup> *Phaedrus*, 246.

got the better of the noble one and dragged the chariot downward, were denizens of the world of reality, of the world of the forms. In that antenatal world what we can now see only brokenly and by glimpses, by glimpses only in our highest moments, we saw then steadily, habitually and in perfection. There, too, our souls, in harmony with the harmony of the whole, not only heard it but vibrated in unison with it.

“ Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting.  
 The soul that rises with us, our life's star  
 Hath had elsewhere its setting  
 And cometh from afar.  
 Not in entire forgetfulness,  
 And not in utter nakedness,  
 But trailing clouds of glory do we come  
 From God who is our home.”

And hence, too, came :—

“ Those first affections,  
 Those shadowy recollections,  
 Which, be they what they may,  
 Are yet the fountain light of all our day,  
 Are yet the master-light of all our seeing,  
 Uphold us, cherish us.”

And also :—

“ Those echoes from beyond the grave,  
 Recognized intelligence.”

Firstly, says Plato, we have in this world images or shadows of bodies, the knowledge of which stands lowest and is *εἰκασία*, conjecture ; secondly, we have bodies themselves, a knowledge of which and of what pertains to which is *πίστις*, belief, and those two (*εἰκασία* and *πίστις*) are subdivisions of mere opinion, *δόξα* : thirdly, we have mixed ideas, ideas into the

conception of which an image necessarily enters, as, for instance, the idea or essence of a triangle or circle—and that is *διάνοια*—a knowledge of mixed ideas; and lastly, we have pure ideas, and a knowledge of them is the highest knowledge of all, pure intelligence, *νόησις*. Hence the highest wisdom is *ἀνάμνησις*, recollection—the recovery in its purity of the knowledge we once had before the soul fell and became imprisoned in the flesh and was doomed to exile in this world.

Now, how this sublimely poetical theory has influenced poetry, nay, how it has permeated much of our highest poetry in various degrees, sometimes streaming over it in direct floods of light, sometimes in radiance broken, as it were, into shafts, a beam here and a beam there, sometimes in light reflected or refracted from other poetry aglow with it—of all this illustration would be endless. Of this divine philosopher, it may in very truth be said, in Milton's words :—

“ Hither, as to their fountain, other stars  
Repairing in their golden urns draw light ;

\*            \*            \*            \*

By tincture or reflection they augment  
Their small peculiar.”

But before going on to illustration, we must pause for a moment over the Platonic theory of *ἔρως*, Love. We have seen that the soul, though in prison and in exile, has not altogether forgotten its former existence, so that, where it sees the good, the beautiful, the true in drossy copies of earth, it recognizes them and

is impelled towards them by the divine instinct within. Now *ἔρως* or love in its purity is this *δργή* or passion, it is the struggling of the soul, clogged with the flesh and with all the degrading *ἐπιθυμίας* (appetites) and impediments of the flesh, to commune and bring itself into union with the beautiful, the good, the true. If the carnal mundane element, the fleshly environment of the soul, predominates over the divine and spiritual, the soul itself, then is this divine impulse degraded into mere human passion. But if the soul can assert itself over its enemy the body, then will this divine impulse expand, intensify, educate and become the best means for leading the soul upward and upward till it sees again the vision it once saw and again contemplates the beautiful, the good, the true. And the genesis of this is described in the *Phaedrus*. An object reflecting the beautiful presents itself, a beautiful woman, it may be, or a beautiful man, for love in Plato's sense of the term is sexless. When it is contemplated, the clogged soul becomes aware of its presence, is greatly disturbed and agitated and all the symptoms of what we call falling in love come on. And so love is generated and soul communes with soul. And this is the first step. "Beginning," as Diotima says in the *Symposium*, "beginning from the things of beauty we must keep ascending for the sake of the beautiful itself, by making use, as it were, of steps from one beautiful object to two and from two to all, and from the beauty of bodies to the beauty of soul and from the beauty of

soul to that of pursuits, from the beauty of pursuits to that of doctrines, until we rise at length from the beauty of doctrines generally to that single one relating to nothing else than beauty in the abstract and we know at last what is the beautiful itself." We are then in the presence of the beautiful, the true, the good. For these three to the Greek were one. So there are six scales :—

1. Contemplation of personal beauty in a human individual.

2. Contemplation of intellectual beauty in the same.

3. Contemplation of material beauty considered universally and abstractedly.

4. Contemplation of intellectual beauty considered universally, abstracted from matter ; by which the soul becomes conscious of its dignity, is converted so that a spiritual death and regeneration follow.

5. The light of the beautiful itself received into the soul.

6. The discovery, or rather re-discovery, of the beautiful, the true, the good, and so the complete purgation of the soul.

We may now proceed to illustrations from English poetry. The first English poet who owes much to Plato is Spenser, and it is this last aspect of the Platonic philosophy, the theory of the *ἔπος*, which most attracted him. With that then we will begin.

The 'Hymn in Honour of Love' is little more than a paraphrase of passages from the *Phaedrus* and the

*Symposium*. The eulogies of Love in the *Symposium* gave the idea. His lineage is traced by Spenser as Plato traces it. He is the son of Plenty and of Poverty.<sup>1</sup> His plastic harmonizing power as exerted on the elemental forces of matter is described in verses which paraphrase the fourteenth chapter of the *Symposium* and so, too, his influence on the soul of man spurring him on to embrace the beautiful :—

“ He is illumin’d with that goodly sight  
Unto like goodly semblance to aspire.  
Therefore, in choice of love he doth desire  
That seems on earth most heavenly to embrace ;  
That same is Beauty born of heavenly race.”

The effect of the beautiful presenting itself to the soul and the result of the passion inspired is then described in verses which paraphrase the sixty-fifth chapter of the *Phaedrus*. The distinction between the lower passion affecting the base and mundane nature, and that higher passion which appeals to the soul is again nothing but a paraphrase of passages in the *Symposium* and *Phaedrus*. The whole of the passage beginning “ For Love is Lord of Truth and Loyalty ” to the line “ To win them worship which to thee obey ” is the substance of the sixth and seventh chapters of the *Symposium*.

In the next hymn, the ‘ Hymn in Honour of Beauty,’ we are with Plato at every step. The fifth stanza gives us the doctrine of the types :—

<sup>1</sup> *Symposium*, 203.

"What time this world's great work-master did cast  
 To make all things such as we now behold,  
 It seems that He before His eyes had placed  
 A goodly pattern to whose perfect mould  
 He fashion'd them . . .  
 That wondrous pattern, wheresoe'er it be,  
                   \*           \*           \*           \*  
 Is perfect Beauty."

This passage is taken immediately from the ninth chapter of the *Timaeus*. Spenser then proceeds to show how false and absurd any material conceptions of beauty must be, for, being immortal of immortal essence, it cannot exist "in white and red" or "in mixture made of colours fair and goodly temperament," for that is all of the earth earthy. Now put this beside the eleventh chapter of Plato's *Symposium* (183), where we read that, "He is not a real lover who is in love with a thing which is not lasting, since, as soon as the flower of the body of which he is enamoured has faded, he goes away," and this is of course the key to the Platonic conception of beauty, that it must not be confounded with its sensuous symbol, for, as beauty lies not there, so the passion which that excites is not love. And so again he continues:—

"Beauty is not, as fond men misdeem  
 An outward show of things that only seem.  
                   \*           \*           \*           \*  
 But that fair lamp from whose celestial ray  
 That light proceeds which kindleth lover's fire  
 Shall never be extinguished nor decay.  
                   \*           \*           \*           \*  
 For it is heavenly born and cannot die,  
 Being a parcel of the purest sky."

And then Spenser goes on to paraphrase the sixtieth chapter of the *Phaedrus*, describing the descent of the soul from its celestial home and its imprisonment in the body :—

“So every spirit as it is most pure  
And hath in it the more of heavenly light,  
So it the fairer body doth procure  
To habit in.

\* \* \* \*

For of the soul the body form doth take,  
For soul is form and doth the body make.”

Then follows the beautiful exhortation to men and women not to forget what real love means, not to confound it with what is merely sensuous, but to remember that :—

“Love is a celestial harmony  
Of likely hearts composed of stars' concent,  
Which join together in sweet sympathy  
To work each other's joy and true content,  
Which they have harbour'd since their first descent  
Out of their heavenly bowers, where they did see  
And know each other, here belov'd to be.”

In the following two hymns to ‘Heavenly Love’ and ‘Heavenly Beauty’ the design of this prince of philosophic poets was to link Platonism with Christianity, or rather to exalt the Christian conception above the Platonic, to show how love embodied itself in its highest manifestation, even in the person of the Son of God sacrificing Himself for the regeneration of the world, and how beauty manifests itself in the glorious face of the divine eternal majesty of Christian revelation and in the heaven of Christian hope. The ‘Faerie Queene’ is penetrated with

the same Platonism, the educating power of love. Thus in Book I, v, we are told how :—

“ The noble heart which harbours virtuous thought,  
And is with child of glorious great intent,  
Can never rest until it forth have brought  
The eternal brood of glories excellent.”

This and similar sentiments are taken directly from Diotima's discourse in the *Symposium*. Again, Britomartis in the third book may be regarded as the incarnation of the high, true love described in the *Phaedrus*, as the enchanter Busirane is that of the grosser and carnal love ; while the noble stanzas which open the third canto of the third book are little more than paraphrases of Phaedrus' speech near the beginning of the *Symposium*. Again in the fifth canto of the same book the two types of love as described in the *Phaedrus* and the *Symposium* are contrasted.

And now let us follow the golden thread of this Platonic theory of the *ἔρως*. We must not stop to trace it in detail, although it would be easy to multiply illustrations from the Elizabethan erotic poetry, where, mixed and crossed with Italian strains—for we must remember that the Italian love poetry from Dante onwards is steeped in Platonism—it is constantly present, and so also is a sort of bastard Platonism in Donne and the metaphysical poets. The leading and characteristic idea of the Platonic doctrine of *ἔρως* is, of course, the ascending scale of love mounting in its progressive degrees to the vision of the universal. Next chronologically to Spenser comes

Henry More, who in his *Psychozoia* has put the doctrine with great clearness. He is contrasting how differently "Form" fares in its own world and in this base world of matter :—

"Farre otherwise it fares in this same lond  
Of Truth and Beauty then in mortall brood  
Of earthly lovers who impassion'd  
With outward forms . . . .  
This inward beauty unto that they deal  
That little beauteous is. Thus into th' dirt they reel,"

but, he continues :—

"And this I wot is the Soul's excellence  
That from the hint of every painted glance  
Of shadows sensible, she doth from hence  
Her radiant life and lovely hue advance  
To higher pitch and by good governance  
May weaned be from love of fading light  
In outward forms, having true cognizance  
That those vain shows are not the beauty bright  
That takes men so."

On this same idea Milton has seized. In the eighth book of 'Paradise Lost' the angel says to Adam :—

"In loving thou dost well : in passion not,  
Wherein true love consists not : love refines  
The thoughts, and heart enlarges : hath his seat  
In reason and is judicious, is the scale  
By which to heavenly love thou may'st ascend."

And so again in 'Paradise Lost,' V, 508 :—

"Well hast thou taught the way that might direct  
Our knowledge and the scale of nature set  
From centre to circumference, whereon  
In contemplation of created things  
By steps we may ascend to God."

'Comus' is strongly tingured with this form of Platonism, the necessity for the purification of the soul, for keeping it uncontaminated by its fleshly

environment. See, for instance, the fine passage commencing :—

“So dear to Heaven is saintly Chastity,  
That, when a soul is found sincerely so,  
A thousand liveried angels lackey her,  
Till oft-converse with heavenly habitants  
Begins to cast a beam on the outward shape,  
The unpolluted temple of the mind,  
And turns it by degrees to the soul's essence,  
Till all be made immortal,”

while the lines which follow are an adaptation of a well-known passage in the *Phaedo* describing the soul saturated with flesh and so embrutalized.

The latter part of the seventeenth century and the whole of the eighteenth century till the Revival is a period when Platonic erotism was not likely to find much sympathy and it exerted, so far as I am aware, no influence worth speaking of on English poetry, though here and there its presence is slightly discernible chiefly in allusions. But it revived again with Shelley, who translated, very eloquently if very inaccurately, the *Symposium*. Shelley clothed the Platonic theory of love with a glory and a fervour such as no other poet has invested it with. Thus in the ‘Hymn to Intellectual Beauty’ :—

“Spirit of Beauty that dost consecrate  
With thine own hues all thou dost shine upon,  
Of human thought or form,  
Thy light alone, like mist o’er mountains driven  
Or music by the night wind sent,  
Gives grace and truth to life’s unquiet dream.  
Man were immortal and omnipotent,  
Did’st thou, unknown and awful as thou art,  
Keep with thy glorious train firm state within his heart.”

Again in the magnificent lines in 'Adonais':—

"The one Spirit's plastic stress  
Sweeps through the dull dense world, compelling there  
All new successions to the forms they wear,  
Torturing the unwilling dross that checks its flight  
To its own likeness, as each mass may bear,"

we have a reminiscence partly of the function of *ἔπος* in the *Symposium*, partly of the energy of the divine artificer in the *Timæus*. Indeed 'Adonais' and 'Epipsychidion' especially are pervaded by Platonism.

But it is time to bring this section of our subject to a conclusion, and we may conclude it with Tennyson's 'In Memoriam.' The Platonic ascending scale of love here finds beautiful illustration. The love for an individual and for the beauty of an individual soul leads upward by degrees to the vision of universal beauty and universal good. First there is the simple love of the individual for the individual:—

"I lov'd thee, Spirit, and love, nor can  
The soul of Shakespeare love thee more."

Then we have the identification of what constituted his friend with all that is good and great universally:—

"I see thee what thou art and know  
Thy likeness to the wise below,  
Thy kindred with the great of old!"

Then what pertains merely to the individual drops away:—

"And in my thought with scarce a sigh  
I take the pressure of thine hand,"

and merges in the universal:—

"Strange friend, past, present, and to be ;  
 Lov'd deeper, darklier understood ;  
 Behold I dream a dream of good  
 And mingle all the world with thee.

"My love involves the love before ;  
 My love is vaster passion now ;  
 Though mix'd with God and Nature thou,  
 I seem to love thee more and more."

And so at last through love, love for the individual,  
 the poet rises to the vision of

"That God which ever lives and loves,  
 One God, one law, one element."

We need not, of course, suppose that this was consciously suggested by Plato, though Tennyson is a Platonist and abounds with reminiscences even of the technicalities of the Platonic philosophy, as of the doctrine of *anamnesis* in the 'Two Voices':—

"Moreover something is or seems  
 That touches me with mystic gleams  
 Like glimpses of forgotten dreams,"

as in 'Gareth and Lynette' where, in lines recalling a famous passage in the *Phaedrus*, is described how the vision of ideal truth presents itself to the flesh-clogged intelligence:—

"At times the summit of the high city flash'd :  
 At times the spires and turrets half-way down  
 Prick'd through the mist : at times the great gate shone  
 Only, that open'd on the field below :  
 Anon the whole fair city had disappeared,"

while in the lines

"Seeing the city is built  
 To music, therefore never built at all  
 And therefore built for ever,"

we are in the very heart of the phenomenal and noumenal verity of the Eleatic School. The consideration of such passages shows that they who like Plato can tear away the veil of phenomena and accident and pierce to truth will find themselves in her presence together with him.

And now quitting this aspect of Platonism let us go back and see how in its other aspects it has affected our poetry. The 'Faerie Queene' is largely marked by the presence of other forms of Platonism besides the Platonic conception of love. That life is a period of probation and trial for the soul, that the world and the flesh must be conquered, that the body and its appetites must be subdued, that action, conduct and aspiration should rest on spiritual foundations, on loyalty to the Divine, to the Divine within man and the Divine without man, all this is no doubt quite as Christian as Platonic, but innumerable touches show how Spenser's thoroughly Christian temper and ideals are coloured with Platonism. In the Garden of Adonis, described in the sixth canto of the third book, we have in the two forms of being—that which is ever existent and has no generation, and that which is in a state of becoming but never really is—the doctrine of the types and matter, the description being plainly suggested by the ninth and following chapters of the *Timaeus*. In the ninth canto of the second book, the description of the Palace of Alma, which is the human body, contains several adaptations from the elaborate

account of the creation of the human body in the *Timaeus*. In the ninth canto of the first book the celebrated argument against suicide in the *Phaedo* and 'Apology' is borrowed,

"The soldier may not move from watchful sted,  
Nor leave his stand until his Captain bid,"

having by the way been originally borrowed by Plato from Pythagoras.

And finally, for I must not linger over particular illustrations, in the sublime vision

"Of ebb and flow and ever-during power,  
And central peace, subsisting at the heart  
Of endless agitation,"<sup>1</sup>

of heaven's universal harmony composing earth's myriad discords in the fragment at the end of his poem, we catch again the note of Plato.

Passing from Spenser to Spenser's disciple, Henry More, the Platonist, we find in his *Psychozoia*, published in 1647, a professedly Platonic poem, but it is Platonism mixed up with all the extravagance of Neo-Platonism, confusion being doubly confounded by intermixture with Iamblichism and Cabalism, so that much of the poem is simply unintelligible. But let me go back for a moment. I ought not to have omitted Sir John Davis' admirable philosophic poem, the *Nosce Teipsum*, a treatise on the immortality of the soul, published in 1602. Davis had carefully read the *Phaedo*, but he does not follow Plato, differing from him in many crucial respects,

<sup>1</sup> 'Excursion,' IV, 1145.

as for example in denying the pre-existence of the soul. His knowledge of Plato is seen rather in what he combats than what he accepts. He is more Platonic, though his Platonism is very faint, in his other poem, the 'Orchestra.'

Though one of the favourite studies of Milton's *Il Penseroso* was to

" Unsphere  
The spirit of Plato, to unfold  
What worlds or what vast regions hold  
The immortal mind that hath forsook  
Her mansion in this fleshly nook,"

we do not find many traces of sympathy with Plato in Milton. One of his Latin poems *De Ideâ Platonicâ quemadmodum Aristoteles intellexit* appears to be a burlesque either of Plato's theory of the archetype, or of Aristotle's criticism, or perhaps of both. It is in 'Comus' and in 'Comus' only, with the exception of a few occasional reminiscences in 'Paradise Lost,' that we find, I think, direct reminiscences of Plato. The truth is that Milton was too bigoted and too uncompromisingly Hebraic and Christian to have much respect for the ancient philosophies (with the exception of Stoicism, which against his will fascinated him), however much he was attracted by the ancient classical poetry. We know how he sums them up in 'Paradise Lost' (II, 565) as:—

" Vain wisdom all and false philosophy,"

and how sternly he makes Christ pronounce them in 'Paradise Regained' (IV, 291):—

" False and little else but dreams,  
Conjectures, fancies built on nothing firm,"

despatching Plato particularly in one contemptuous line,

" The next to fabling fell and smooth conceits."

The poems of Norris, of Bemerton (1657-1711), are absolutely full of Platonism. See, for instance, the poem which he calls ' The Elevation,' the general design of which, as he explains in a prose note, is " to represent the gradual ascent of the soul by contemplation to the supreme good together with its firm adherence to it and its full acquiescence in it. All which is done figuratively, under the allegory of a local elevation from the feculent regions of this lower world." The fifth stanza contains the doctrine of *anamnesis* :—

" But see, to what new region am I come ?  
I know it well, it is my native home.  
Here led I once a life divine,  
Which did all good, no evil know :  
Ah ! who would such sweet bliss resign  
For those vain shows which fools admire below ? "

Equally Platonic are the poems on ' Love ' and ' Beauty,' and that on ' Seraphic Love,' in which the poet sees

" The source of good, the light Archetypal,  
Beauty in the original."

Akenside is the next poet in whom we find traces of the study of Plato. In the ' Pleasures of Imagination ' we have frequent reminiscences of Plato, as where he speaks of Beauty,

" By steps conducting our enraptur'd search  
 To that eternal origin whose power,  
 Through all the unbounded symmetry of things,  
 Like rays effulging from the parent sun,  
 This endless mixture of her charms diffus'd,"

and in a beautiful passage he describes the identity of beauty, truth and good :—

" Thus was Beauty sent from Heaven,  
 The lovely mistress of Truth and Good  
 In this dark world : for Truth and Good are one  
 And Beauty dwells in them and they in her  
 With like participation."

In the fine passage in the second book beginning " Inhabitant of Earth, to whom is given," he paraphrases the sixteenth chapter of the tenth book of the Laws.

And now we must leap to Wordsworth, the most Platonic, by far the most Platonic, of English poets. From Plato he adopts, as we have already seen, the use he has made of the doctrine of anamnesis and of the doctrine of ideas and essence, as in the 'Ode on the Intimations of Immortality.' The same Platonic conceptions appear in the 'Evening Ode' and in the sonnet entitled 'I heard, alas! 'twas only in a dream' (where the note appended proves his acquaintance with the *Phaedo*), and the sublime influence of Plato penetrates his poems generally. We see it particularly in his habitual employment of the word "shows," as in the 'Poet's Epitaph':—

" The outward shows of sky and earth  
 Of hill and valley he has view'd,"

and in that grand passage in the 'Excursion,' in which the Wanderer relates how

"What we feel of sorrow and despair  
From ruin and from change, and all the grief,  
That passing shows of Being leave behind,  
Appeared an idle dream."<sup>1</sup>

He has himself spoken of poets as lords of the visionary eye, of those who can pierce through phenomena to essence, and on this is based his conception of the true function of the poet, as one who sees into the life of things, into the soul, into the idea, the form which gives them their shapes. But the Platonism of Wordsworth would, if treated in mere outline, form matter for a whole lecture.

And now in turning to Aristotelean ethics and Stoicism I must give up all hope of detailed historical illustration and confine myself to two examples. I will take Spenser for one and Matthew Arnold for the other.

The ethical allegory of the 'Faerie Queene' is based on and was suggested by Aristotle's 'Ethics.' The several books, which were to be twelve in number, were intended to fashion an ideal character perfected "in the twelve moral virtues as Aristotle hath devised," while the central hero, King Arthur, was to shadow a hero who had been perfected in those virtues and who was to stand metaphorically for the Μεγαλόψυχος, the great souled man, in accordance with Aristotle's remark that "the virtue of

<sup>1</sup> 'Excursion,' I, 949-952.

great-mindedness seems to be a kind of ornament of all the other virtues, in that it makes them better and cannot be without them.”<sup>1</sup> So that the whole framework of Spenser’s allegory was suggested by Aristotle, though it may be observed that only three of his virtues, Temperance, Friendship and Justice, correspond with Aristotle’s. But he has on one occasion followed Aristotle so closely that he reproduces minute technical details, namely, in the second canto of the second book, where Guyon visits the castle belonging to Medina and her two sisters. According to Aristotle’s doctrine of the mean, virtue is a mean between the extremes of excess and defect, a middle state between two faulty ones in the way of excess on one side and of defect on the other. Thus the virtue of courage is a mean between its defect, the vice of cowardice, and its excess, the vice of rashness. In like manner the virtue of liberality is a mean between stinginess and prodigality. So the three sisters, Medina (the mean), Perissa (excessive), and Elissa (from *ελάσσων*, the too little), represent Aristotle’s conception of virtue and vice. The Castle is the body.

“Therein three sisters dwelt of sundry sort,  
The children of one sire by mothers three  
Who dying whilom did divide this fort  
To them by equal shares.”

The three mothers correspond (and here Plato comes in again) to the Platonic division of the soul

<sup>1</sup> ‘Ethics,’ 4, iii, 16.

into the reasonable (λογιστικόν), the appetitive (ἐπιθυμητικόν) and the high-spirited (θυμοειδές) elements. Medina is modest, grave and gracious. Now note the sisters. Elissa, the too little, is in love with Sir Hudibras, representing θυμός, passion, rashness and moroseness; while Perissa (the too much), loves Sansloy, who represents ἀκρατεία, unbridled licentiousness. Note, too, how Elissa and Hudibras, on the one hand, and Perissa and Sansloy, on the other, are engaged in internecine strife, but coalesce to array themselves against their common foe, Sir Guyon, representing temperance (σωφροσύνη). This typifies the Aristotelean doctrine that the extremes are opposed to each other and to the mean. I have given this detailed instance to show how greatly influenced Spenser was by the details of the 'Ethics.' Whether Shakespeare was acquainted with this work of Aristotle is extremely doubtful, but this may in simple truth be said, that the reflections, in which he embodies ethical and political truths and his philosophy of life, exactly coincide with Aristotle, and there could be no better commentary on the 'Ethics' than the study of human character as depicted by Shakespeare.

One very beautiful application which has been made by Spenser, and after him by Tennyson, of a portion of the Aristotelean philosophy must not be omitted. Aristotle regards man as a social animal and as chiefly concerned, therefore, with the duties proper to his state and condition, ethical, economical

and political, and to instruct him in those duties is the object of the treatises which he has drawn up on those subjects. But he has in the 'Ethics' described happiness as *ἐνεργεία τῆς ψυχῆς κατ' ἀρετήν*, as a working of the immaterial part in the best way possible, in the way, that is to say, of its highest excellence, time and external appliances sufficient for its development being supposed. His definition of happiness leads him necessarily to pronounce that the ideal life is the *βίος θεωρητικός*—the purely contemplative life, the perfect energy of contemplation which is self-sufficient and the life of God. But though it may and should be an ideal, it is beyond our reach and cannot in practice be realized. Such a life, he says, will be higher than mere human nature, because a man will live thus not in so far as he is man, but in so far as there is in him a divine principle. It is then the second in degree of happiness which is within his reach, i.e., the full performance of the duties of practical life. Is it right that a man, living in the midst of life's duties with the energy to fulfil them, should neglect them for the supreme ideal? No, it is through the *βίος πρακτικός* (the practical life) that the path must lie; and then, all duties fulfilled and all that this life here requires performed, then only may the other with propriety concern us. Turn to the tenth canto of the first book of the 'Faerie Queene,' where the Red Cross Knight is conducted by the old man, Heavenly Contemplation, to the specular Mount, and see how beautifully Spenser

has applied this. The Red Cross Knight is so fascinated by the vision of the New Jerusalem revealed to him by Contemplation that he is eager at once to leave the world and go to live among the saints of the Holy City.

“ ‘ O let me not ’ (quoth he) ‘ then turn again  
Back to the world, whose joys so fruitless are ;  
But let me here for aye in peace remain,  
Or straightway on that last long voyage fare,  
That nothing may my present hope impair.’  
‘ That may not be ’ (said he) ‘ nor mayest thou yet  
Forgo that royal maid’s bequeathed care,  
Who did her cause into thy hand commit,  
Till from her cursed foe thou have her freely quit.’ ”

This, too, is the main moral of Tennyson’s ‘ Holy Grail,’ as is plainly expressed in Arthur’s speech at the end of the poem. It is an allegory of the relation of the βίος θεωρητικός to the βίος πρακτικός, of the contemplative to the active life, immediately suggested perhaps rather by Spenser than by Aristotle.

I have left myself no space for the discussion of the influence on our poetry of Stoicism, as embodied in the *Enchiridion* of Epictetus and Arrian’s ‘ Discourses of Epictetus ’ and in the *Meditations* of Marcus Aurelius, and transmitted also through the writings of Cicero, Horace, Persius, Seneca, Lucan and Juvenal. But let me briefly note that you will find it most marked in Shakespeare, Ben Jonson and Chapman ; in Daniel’s ‘ Epistle to the Countess of Cumberland,’ one of the noblest moral poems in our language ; in Milton, whose ideal is almost as much Stoic as Christian. It penetrates ‘ Comus,’ and in the

great speech of the Elder Brother beginning "Yes, and keep it still," you have it in quintessence ; it informs the character of Satan and the character of Christ, for each have in common the same *αὐτάρκεια* or self-sufficing independence, the same inflexible will

"And courage never to submit or yield  
And what is else not to be overcome."

Both are Stoics, and in the mouth of both Milton has placed many of the most characteristic sentiments of Stoicism. And this is the more remarkable as Milton has, both in the second book of 'Paradise Lost' and in the speech put in Christ's mouth in the fourth book of 'Paradise Regained,' spoken with the utmost contempt of Stoicism, representing Christ as saying :—

"The Stoic last in philosophic pride  
By him call'd virtue ; and his virtuous man  
Wise, perfect in himself, and all possessing,  
Equal to God, oft shames not to prefer  
As fearing God nor man, contemning all  
Wealth, pleasure, pain or torment, death and life,  
Which when he lists, he leaves or boasts he can,  
For all his tedious talk is but vain boast."

Stoicism largely affected the poetry of Gray. Shelley also was a great admirer of the Philosophy of the Porch. The Stoical temper and sentiment often find grand embodiment, as in his 'Prometheus.' The poetry of Wordsworth and Matthew Arnold gives us the best of commentaries on the great central doctrine of the Stoics, τὸ ζῆν κατὰ φύσιν, the living, that is to say, not according to part of our nature but according to our whole nature and conformably

also to the order of the universal nature. Turn especially to 'Laodamia,' to the 'Ode to Duty,' to 'The Happy Warrior,' to the end of the 'Song at the Feast of Brougham Castle.' The hero of 'Resolution and Independence' is a pure Stoic ; so also is the Wanderer, the hero of the 'Excursion.' Then turn in Matthew Arnold's works to the poem called 'Resignation,' to the lines beginning 'Weary of myself and sick of asking,' and to the long lyric in the first act of 'Empedocles on Etna,' the central ideas of which are pure Stoicism. Deduct from the philosophy of Wordsworth's poetry I do not say what he has borrowed from Platonism and Stoicism but what he has in common with those philosophies, and you deduct two-thirds of what is most characteristic of his philosophy. Deduct from the philosophy of Matthew Arnold's poetry what he directly and indisputably owed to Stoicism and how little philosophy will you leave him.

I know too well how slight and imperfect is this outline of the indebtedness of our poetry to the philosophy of Greece ; but its purpose will be answered if I have shown the lines on which such an inquiry should run, if I have stimulated you to be interested in such an inquiry and revealed another link in the chain which connects us English so indissolubly both by ties of kinship and ties of gratitude with ancient Greece.



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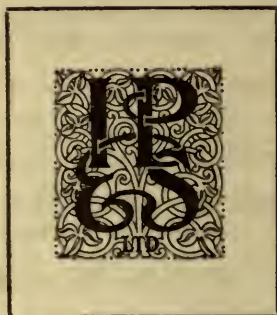
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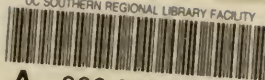
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